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Curating *Digital Pedagogy* in the Humanities

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Getting Started and Overview

It is nearly impossible these days to teach a class that does not engage technology in some way. All too often, however, that engagement is unplanned, incidental to the course, or inadequately assessed. And, in the case of faculty members who are wary of technological pedagogical interventions in their classes, such engagement may even be condemned as a distraction from the “real” work of the course.

What does effective teaching look like when it is directly, intentionally, and purposefully connected to the Web and to the increasing (and increasingly sophisticated) number of digital tools, platforms, and methods now available? How can students learn to think and work together in new ways, and to deepen their understanding of the academic subjects under consideration, through the use of such tools, platforms, and methods? What does effective, creative, active, and engaged pedagogy look like in the context of the modern Web?

These are all questions that *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* sets out to address. Unlike many publications related to teaching, in which faculty members provide secondhand, reflective essay narratives on course experiences, this collection provides concrete teaching materials that will help faculty expand their pedagogical practices. The collection as a whole attempts to highlight the *stuff* of teaching—concrete resources such as syllabi, assignments, course Web sites, readings, rubrics, and even student creations—that faculty members can adopt for their own courses. The publication is organized by keyword; each keyword contains a statement by the scholars who have curated it, followed by an annotated list of ten resources related to the keyword. In total,

¹ The authors are listed in alphabetical order and contributed equally to authorship of “Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities.”

across fifty-nine keywords, the collection provides 573 unique artifacts that are both direct samples of digital pedagogy in action and models of teaching ideas that can be reused and remixed.

The structure of the collection and its focus on concrete models of pedagogical practice represent an approach to the scholarship of teaching that we think will be useful both to faculty members who have practiced digital pedagogy for a long time and to faculty members who are just beginning to consider it. Indeed, we designed *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* to appeal to a wide range of audiences:

- Faculty members and instructors in higher education classrooms who want to gather examples of assignments to use for their courses;
- Scholars of digital pedagogy who want to read about a variety of ways that faculty members are teaching with technology;
- Scholar-teachers who are looking specifically for examples of digital pedagogy from one or two keywords directly relevant to their areas of expertise;
- Graduate and undergraduate students who are researching a digital methodology and want to cite examples of digital teaching practices related to various keywords;
- Staff members from centers for teaching and learning who are looking for examples of innovative pedagogy that they can share with interested faculty members;
- Instructional designers who are looking for innovative assignments to use in online, blended, or Web-enhanced courses;
- Administrators who are thinking about how their academic programs can make use of new technologies.

As faculty members, students, staff members, and administrators explore the collection, various features, such as the ability to “favorite” artifacts and create collections, will ease the process of incorporating digital pedagogy into their own practices.

Why “Digital Pedagogy”?

In titling this collection *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*, the editors signal our focus on the humanities and on digital pedagogy, which we consider to be a field. The term digital pedagogy has been increasingly used to describe a rich area of pedagogical practice that makes use of digital tools, platforms, and methods and that both shapes and is shaped by emerging digital ecosystems. Some of these practices stem from the advent of new digital tools and methodologies in academic practice, while others stem from a larger global context—a globally networked world in which knowledge is created, shared, and remixed across digital networks. Still others result from calls to prepare students to live, work, and take political action in such a world. Pairing “pedagogy” with “digital” indicates the intentionality of these practices; we agree with Paul Fyfe’s 2011 assertion in “[Digital Pedagogy Unplugged](#)” that “it is irresponsible to teach with technology without a digital pedagogy” (par. 20). We have been asked before how we

would define *digital pedagogy*; while the previous sentences contain the germ of our definition, the collection as a whole takes a more fractal approach: among the nearly six hundred artifacts and fifty-nine curatorial statements included in the collection lie a number of different approaches to what it means to teach in, through, and along with digital technology. Indeed, we see digital pedagogy as an *approach* rather than a *thing*; it is best understood through the multiple practices of its various participants, and we have designed this collection to highlight those practices and to help others begin to take part in them, as well.²

Finding a starting place in the evidence collected rather than in a taxonomy or a unified theory of digital pedagogy, the editors have created a curated, peer-reviewed scholarly infrastructure for digital pedagogy that documents the richly textured culture of digital teaching and learning in the humanities and that will continue to generate future use by providing both models for teachers and evidence for further scholarship in this area. Our approach functions on the metaphor of scholarship as a conversation, one of the threshold concepts for information literacy identified by the Association of College and Research Libraries in [Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education](#) and explained as occurring when “[c]ommunities of scholars, researchers, or professionals engage in sustained discourse with new insights and discoveries occurring over time as a result of varied perspectives and interpretations.” This broad understanding of scholarship accommodates the many forms that the digital pedagogy conversation takes, from the interchange of assignment prompt and student response to the open sharing of teaching materials online. It also makes room for multiple, diverse voices and perspectives to be shared within that conversation.

Why a Digital Format?

Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities uses digital affordances to make visible the work of digital pedagogy, work that conventional methods of scholarship about teaching and learning have effectively hidden from view. This digital format allows us to amplify the voices of those practicing digital pedagogy, voices and conversations that might be missed because they are not at research-intensive institutions, are not published in conventional journals, or are obscured when teaching, as so often happens, takes second place to scholarship in discussions of digital methods in the humanities. Taken together, the sheer number of participants involved in this project demonstrates the strength and magnitude of the digital pedagogy conversation: four editors, eighty-four curators, and more than seven hundred artifact creators.³ In addition, organization by keyword—words with contested meaning in different discourse communities—provides

² Fyfe takes a similar approach by gathering a set of case studies that illustrate examples of what he terms “digital pedagogy unplugged”: analog practices of the methodologies of digital humanities in the classroom that surface the mechanics of those methodologies.

³ This number for creators includes multiple examples of collective creators—e.g., the [FemTechNet collective](#) and the University of Virginia’s [Scholars’ Lab](#)—that, were they to list individual contributors, would increase the number of creators significantly.

both a defining taxonomy and multiple entry points for this conversation across the many communities practicing or interested in digital pedagogy. These communities include networks (both formal and informal) built around computers and writing, digital humanities, digital rhetoric, digital classics, language learning, media studies, networked learning, online teaching and learning, open education, and public history, to name just a few.

What’s in This Collection?

So, what will the reader find in this digital pedagogy collection? The project is organized around keywords representing important concepts that can serve to organize the work of teaching with technology. For each keyword, we have engaged a curator (or a group of curators) to bring together the following four sections of the keyword entry:

- A curatorial statement, wherein the curator explains and contextualizes a keyword within digital pedagogy;
- Ten curated pedagogical artifacts that illustrate that keyword plus metadata and annotations for each;
- Five related materials for further reading about the keyword; and
- A works-cited list, including a citation for each of the artifacts collected.

For more on our keyword-based approach, please see “[Keywords](#)” in the section *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Structure and Approach*.

Key Concepts in Digital Pedagogy

What is digital pedagogy in the humanities? What are these myriad voices saying? What can we conclude from this conversation?

While we resist the idea of a single unifying definition, a review of key concepts in this collection illustrates how the keywords and artifacts represent a multivocal and richly diverse digital pedagogy as it is actually practiced across many types of universities and colleges. We derive these concepts by analyzing the discussion of pedagogy in curatorial statements, by conducting rhetorical analysis for themes in our curators’ introductory statements and artifact annotations, and by looking for patterns in the artifacts in the collection, aided by methods of information management, such as indexing and tagging, as well as network analysis of cross-referenced keywords.

In the following section, we focus on six key concepts of digital pedagogy: openness, collaboration, play, practice, student agency, and identity. We briefly explain each

concept and its significance for digital pedagogy, and we illustrate the concepts through examples of how they are manifested across this collection.⁴

For those new to digital pedagogy, the examples shared for each concept offer ready entry points into what might otherwise seem an overwhelming number of pedagogical artifacts.

Openness

Openness—understood as transparency of practice, removal of boundaries, and sharing of content, tools, and ideas—is a vital feature of digital pedagogy.

There are many thriving communities of teachers openly sharing teaching ideas and materials online, which made *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* possible. One such community centers around digital humanities, whose open practices are described by Lisa Spiro in terms of “the open exchange of ideas, the development of open content and software, and transparency” (“[This](#)” 24). There is also a strong and partially overlapping community in a variety of disciplines practicing open and public pedagogies—highlighted especially in the keywords “[Network](#),” “[Open](#),” “[Online](#),” and “[Public](#)”—wherein “openness” is about transparency of the teaching and learning process and also about opening up the boundaries of the classroom so that learners engage with communities beyond their own classmates. Others come to this topic through the approach of open-access scholarship. JISC’s “[Open Practices: A Briefing Paper](#)” documents a variety of open educational practices, including open and public pedagogies, open learning (free and openly available courses online), open scholarship, open sharing of teaching ideas, and open technologies (Beetham et al.).⁵ Ultimately, all of this openness builds on the principle of a free and open Internet (“[A Healthy Internet](#)”).

A number of artifacts in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* illustrate the open sharing of research and teaching practices. The “Fail Log and Open Notebook” assignment in the “History” keyword is modeled on open research movements in history and the sciences (described by Caleb McDaniel in “Open Notebook History”) that document research as it happens, including false starts, failures, and rabbit holes as well as successes.

⁴ For this method, we are indebted to the work of Lisa Spiro, whose list of proposed values for the digital humanities community—openness, collaboration, collegiality and connectedness, diversity, and experimentation (“[This](#)”)—and suggestion of key concepts in digital humanities syllabi—data and database, openness and copyright, network, and interaction (“Knowing”)—highlights some of the same concepts. McCarthy and Witmer, in “Notes Toward a Values-Driven Framework for Digital Humanities Pedagogy,” also include collaboration and openness on their list, along with production—which overlaps with our key concept of practice—and critical thinking.

⁵ See also [Building Open Infrastructure at CUNY](#) (Waltzer et al.).

Digital pedagogy also includes transparency of teaching practice, even when that practice does not work out, as the keyword “[Failure](#)” highlights. In “Use of Research-Based Instructional Strategies in Introductory Physics,” Henderson et. al. suggest that one reason faculty members may discontinue curricular innovations is the lack of transparency about the innovation, which is often presented in an overly rosy manner and without the details needed for successful implementation (11). Open discussion about digital pedagogical methods, successes, and failures can help other practitioners avoid those pitfalls.

Openness in digital pedagogy can also mean surfacing formerly hidden learning practices, such as the resulting transparency when individual reading becomes social annotation (see examples in the keywords “[Annotation](#)” and “[Reading](#)”), writing for the instructor becomes “[Blogging](#)” for the class or general public, or note-taking becomes “[Note Tweeting](#),” an artifact in the keyword “[Hybrid](#).” When shared beyond the instructor and students in the course, such practices enlarge the learning community.

Many keywords also include examples of process documents that uncover the thinking behind digital creation; for the artifact “[Kits for Cultural History](#),” the curators of “[Praxis](#)” recommend that students write rationales explaining their research and design process. Such documents make student learning visible to both student and teacher.

A second aspect of openness within digital pedagogy aligns with open-access publication and the open-source software movements, which have the intention of allowing free use and possibly remixing and redistribution of content, data, tools, etc. Open educational resources (OER) include free and openly available textbooks, simulations, games, assignments, and other educational resources to support learning. While there is a plethora of open content online, findability and quality present hurdles to adoption (Guthrie et al.). A number of repositories (see, for example, [OER Commons](#), [MERLOT](#), and [OpenStax](#)) seek to combat those issues by providing OER in order to broaden the curriculum while saving students money on textbook purchases.

Several keywords in this collection highlight freely available OER content that could be added to a range of humanities courses and that is not readily available in more traditional curricula. See both the resources curated for keywords like “[Diaspora](#),” “[Indigenous](#),” and “[Race](#)” that suggest alternatives to the Western canon and the resources shared under “[Professionalization](#)” and “[Project Management](#)” that challenge one traditional understanding of the humanities as theory rather than practice. Since these keywords all focus on areas sometimes neglected in humanities discourse and teaching, the curators point to resources that help beginners get started.

Other artifacts take advantage of free-to-use tools created as open-source software, such as the use of the online publishing tool [Scalar](#) for the “[Race and the Digital](#)” course Web site and for student projects included in the keyword “[Digital Divides](#).”

Finally, open content is a necessity for the keyword “[Remix](#),” since this practice depends on the ability to create by combining content drawn from multiple sources.

Collaboration

Openness of individual practice enables collaboration, another key concept characterizing digital pedagogy.

The centrality of the keyword “[Collaboration](#)” is demonstrated by its status as the most cross-referenced keyword in the collection (it is listed as a related keyword for thirty other keywords). Collaboration underlies the culture of digital pedagogy because of its importance in the multiple communities that practice digital pedagogy, such as the community of open, networked learning, as described in the keywords “[Network](#)” and “[Online](#).”⁶ Building on social constructivist pedagogies, collaborative assignments and projects have been identified as a “[high-impact educational practice](#)” for student engagement and retention (Kuh). Such practices have been adopted widely in academe and prepare students for the importance of teamwork as a skill for today’s graduates, as explained in the Association of American College and Universities (AAC&U) [Teamwork VALUE Rubric](#).⁷

Within the digital pedagogy community, open sharing of pedagogical practice online leads to assignments developed through serial collaboration, as illustrated by the reuse and adaptation of assignments described in the “[Interface](#)” keyword (see the artifact “[Visualizing Unread Victorian Novels](#)”) and in the evolution of the “[Concept in 60](#)” assignment described in the “[Iteration](#)” keyword. The hashtag syllabus, a relatively recent phenomenon, allows for collaboration among strangers, harnessing the power of networks by means of a social media hashtag that creates a just-in-time learning resource in reaction to contemporary events. For examples, see the artifacts “[Brexit Syllabus](#)” in “[Affect](#),” “[Teaching #BlackLivesMatter](#)” in “[Collaboration](#),” “[#LemonadeSyllabus](#)” in “[Hashtag](#),” “[Ferguson Syllabus](#)” in “[Race](#),” and “[Pulse Orlando Syllabus](#)” in “[Sexuality](#).” This open, collaborative knowledge production brings voices outside of academia into the traditional academic structure of the syllabus.

Examples of more directly collaborative teaching range from formal intercampus collaborative courses, like the “[Century America](#)” project described in the keyword “[Public](#)” or “[Telecollaboration](#)” for language exchange as described in the keyword

⁶ Likewise, Cathy Davidson develops ideas about shared production of knowledge in her early experiments with collaborative assignments.

⁷ Employers cite the ability to work on a team as a desired skill in new hires. See the “[Employer Survey and Economic Trend Research](#)” commissioned by AAC&U, including the 2018 report (Hart Research Associates). This finding was reinforced by technology industry magnates at [Stanford University’s BiblioTech Conference](#) in 2011 and 2012: CEOs want liberal arts and humanities doctoral students who can command language, interpret technical jargon into metaphor and narrative, and work collaboratively (“Welcome”).

“[Language Learning](#)”; to informal networking between courses and individual learners, as in the FemTechNet collaborative’s [Distributed Open Collaborative Course](#) (DOCC) created as a feminist alternative to the massive open online course (MOOC) and cited in the keywords “[Collaboration](#),” “[Gender](#),” “[Network](#),” and “[Online](#)”; to the collaborative teaching without instructors made possible by the “[Peeragogy Handbook](#)” in the keyword “[Network](#).”

Collaborative learning also draws on the concept of openness when it breaks down the boundaries of the classroom to let students learn with broader communities. Students may engage in what danah boyd terms “networked publics”—communities that interact over digital networks—as in the ds106 self-guided, communal digital storytelling course (included in both the “[Remix](#)” and “[Storytelling](#)” keywords) and the “[Digital Diversity Syllabus](#)” (“[Digital Divides](#)”), wherein students engage in electronic communities over a semester, connecting that experience with course content. Students also collaborate across traditional boundaries through the cocreation of digital projects in local communities, such as the “[Our Marathon](#)” (“[Community](#)”) and “[The History Harvest](#)” (“[History](#)”) projects. In the “[Exquisite Engendering Remix Exhibition Assignment](#)” described in the keyword “[Remix](#),” students in the United States and Finland practice globally networked learning, a concept described in the *Faculty Guide for Collaborative Online International Learning Course Development*, by remixing each other’s artistic creations around the theme of gender.

Inviting students into the same scholarly realm that is responsible for constructing large-scale digital projects and shifting scholarly communication inevitably requires a revision to traditional pedagogy. A number of artifacts center on the collaborative production of digital projects, whether as student-faculty collaborative research, such as Kathryn Tomasek’s “[Wheaton College Digital History Project](#)” (“[Curation](#)”), or collaborative projects among students, like the “[Millican ‘Riot,’ 1868](#)” project (“[Labor](#)”). In addition to the keyword “[Collaboration](#),” the keywords “[Labor](#),” “[Project Management](#),” and “[Social Justice](#)” speak to the development of skills and the need for equitable credit for such collaborative knowledge production. See especially the artifacts “[Collaborators’ Bill of Rights](#)” (“[Project Management](#)”) and “Student Collaborators’ Bill of Rights” (“[Collaboration](#)” and “[Labor](#)”), as well as “[Group Contract \(COMM 4543\)](#)” (“[Social Justice](#)”), which defines rules for collaborative project work up front.

Play

A common characteristic shared by many digital pedagogues is the willingness to experiment, to try something new just to see what happens.

In “[Not-Yetness](#),” Amy Collier advocates for “**not** satisfying every condition, **not** fully understanding something, **not** check-listing everything, **not** tidying everything, **not** trying to solve every problem . . . but creating space for emergence to take us to new and unpredictable places, to help us better understand the problems we are trying to solve.” Collier ties this approach to complexity theory, explaining its utility in complex

systems. This openness to new tools and methodologies is reflected in the keywords “[Play](#)” and “[Failure](#).” With the willingness to try comes a tolerance for failure when the new thing does not work out as one might expect. Since experimentation and play often produce unpredictable results, a willingness to accept open-ended processes and results can be an effective strategy for coping with the increasing pace of technological change and so a necessary asset for those who practice digital pedagogy.

Beyond technological change, as André Carrington argues in the keyword “[Futures](#),” this willingness to experiment can help our students become lifelong learners with the necessary persistence to work through unexpected circumstances. In the blog post “[Are They Students or Are They Learners?](#)” David Warlick calls for revising “teacher” into “master learner” in order to step away from the slightly contentious relationship that many classrooms and institutions foster by their very nature. In a pedagogy of play, the instructor is a lifelong learner along with the students. This focus on persistence and an experimental approach to new challenges fits with calls, like the “[LEAP Challenge](#)” from AAC&U, for graduates to develop the skills necessary to approach complex, unstructured problems that cannot be solved by existing methods and disciplines (Schneider).

Spiro proposes “experimentation” in her list of values of the digital humanities community, linking it both to the innovation and entrepreneurship often connected to technology and to the scientific method (“[This](#)”). While the concept of *play* overlaps with this sense of experimentation, we prefer the concept of play for digital pedagogy, where there is not necessarily a clear end in sight but rather a focus on the creative process of learning. In addition, the term *experimentation* carries connotations of scientific research, which is often better-resourced than the humanities, and the practice of experimentation and playfulness is not necessarily contingent on access to research resources, as Katherine D. Harris articulates in “[Play, Collaborate, Break, Build, Share: ‘Screwing Around’ in Digital Pedagogy](#).”

Play is both a way of knowing and a mode of creativity. Mark Sample, in the keyword “[Play](#),” ties the concept of learning through play in part to James Paul Gee’s concept of learning through games—a line of argument also present in the keyword “[Gaming](#),” which offers the games “[Small Worlds](#),” “[Mainichi](#),” and “[Hugpunx](#)” as examples. In Jentery Sayers’s course Prototyping Texts, discussed in both the “[Iteration](#)” and “[Prototype](#)” keywords, students seek understanding by playing with texts—deforming them by substituting words, such as switching genders of pronouns, or reproducing them in different media. Other assignments have students recreate classic literature (*Frankenstein*, for example) in modern social media, like “[A Public Literary Twitter Role-Play](#)” in the keyword “[Hybrid](#).” Through such remediation students can gain, on the one hand, a clearer understanding of the effects of different media and, on the other, the essence of the content separated from form. “[Makerspaces](#)” also engages this sense of play, seeing “making” as both creative production and a way of knowing. In one artifact in that keyword, the course “[Interpretive Machines](#),” students build an object for their

final project to express their understanding of the course’s theme of cultural communication.

All of these approaches require the faculty member to open up space in the classroom and in assignments for students to find their own paths toward knowledge, which may take unexpected (and often unconventional) forms.

Practice

Digital pedagogy has a strong thread of applied learning; most, if not all, keywords include assignments in which students create, make, and do.

As [Susannah McGowan](#) explains, “having students build something or solve a real world problem provides a richer context for learning (grounded in theories from Lave, Brown/Collins/Newman, Bransford, Scardamalia & Bereiter).” This tendency toward experiential or applied learning surfaces in the types of activities described above around “play,” as well as in the many digital projects shared throughout the collection. Keywords like “[Code](#),” “[Design](#),” “[Fieldwork](#),” “[Iteration](#),” “[Makerspaces](#),” “[Praxis](#),” “[Project Management](#),” and “[Prototype](#)” already carry a sense of applied learning. Even in keywords aligned with more traditional humanities subjects, like “[Fiction](#),” “[History](#),” “[Language Learning](#),” “[Poetry](#),” and “[Rhetoric](#),” readers will find assignments that ask students to test their knowledge by applying it, to learn by doing. This heavy focus on practice draws on broader movements across higher education such as project-based learning and active learning. Many “[high-impact educational practices](#)” engage the idea that students are putting their learning into practice, such as collaborative projects, undergraduate research, service learning, internships, and capstone projects (Kuh).

Several keywords recognize the practical side of acquiring skills: students develop digital skills while studying humanities material to prepare them for their future careers. For example, “[Language Learning](#)” links digital pedagogy to the development of twenty-first-century communication. The [Partnership for 21st Century Learning](#), in its *Framework for 21st Century Learning*, advocates for learning that develops key skills like critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Several of our keywords—especially “[Collaboration](#),” “[Labor](#),” “[Praxis](#),” “[Professionalization](#),” and “[Project Management](#)”—touch on these types of skills, as well as other vocational topics. These keywords affirm the enduring value of the humanities and counter what William Pannacker in “[No More Digitally Challenged Liberal-Arts Majors](#)” describes as the “false yet endlessly repeated narrative that the only options for students in the arts and humanities are graduate school and unemployment.”

Beyond developing the digital skills called for by Pannacker, assignments that engage students in practice give them valuable applied experience that they can draw on as they develop their understanding of themselves, as Marilyn Lombardi explains in *Authentic Learning for the 21st Century: An Overview*. Likewise, in “Kolb’s Experiential

Learning Theory: A Meta-model for Career Exploration,” Atkinson and Murrell frame experiential learning as an opportunity for career exploration.

While articulating the value of digital pedagogy in the humanities in developing skills (digital and otherwise) that prepare students for future careers, our curators remind readers not to embrace the concept of higher education as job preparation without critique. Spencer Keralis argues in the keyword “[Labor](#)” that although students can develop skills for their future work, we, as instructors, must not take advantage of their labor. Likewise, the keyword “[Professionalization](#)” includes an essay, “[You Call It Professionalism; I Call It Oppression in a Three-Piece Suit](#),” that uncovers ways the language of professionalism can be oppressive to diverse populations.

In keeping with the concept of play, active-learning projects often focus on process over product and pair action with reflection, which, as Carol Rodgers has explained, is an important step for turning experience into learning. The “[Structuring Reflection](#)” assignment in the keyword “[Assessment](#)”—wherein students reflect on what they learned from their course’s final project—illustrates how such reflection on project-based learning can facilitate assessment.

In other assignments, practice helps students develop communication and collaboration skills as they engage with local communities to create digital projects (see multiple examples in the keyword “[Community](#)”), build digital creations together to promote intercultural dialogue (“[Exquisite Engendering Remix Exhibition Assignment](#)” in the keyword “[Remix](#)”), or perform service learning to address “[Digital Divides](#).” While much of the production in digital pedagogy comes in the form of digital creation, there are a number of examples that employ analog technologies, such as “[Writing on Clay](#)” in the keyword “[Praxis](#)” or “Simulating the Scriptorum” in the keyword “[Interface](#),” wherein students copy texts by candlelight to experience the fading skill of handwriting as a unique experience. In “[Digital Pedagogy Unplugged](#),” Paul Fyfe explores a series of such case studies in which students engage in analog versions of digital research methods. By slowing down digital processes, students can more clearly see their mechanics, which may be obscured by the speed of digital processing.

Student Agency

A number of artifacts highlight the ways in which digital pedagogy encourages students to develop agency as learners.

Agency—or a sense of ownership, control, and efficacy—aids students as they transfer and apply learning in new contexts, as Jessie Moore explains in “Five Essential Principles about Writing Transfer.” In [Open and Integrative: Designing Liberal Education for the New Digital Ecosystem](#), Randy Bass and Bret Eynon argue that higher education must help students develop such agency to prepare them to become lifelong learners in the emerging digital ecosystem, where they will encounter an abundance of disaggregated learning opportunities, which they must negotiate and connect (54–57).

Building on this concept, Rebecca Frost Davis explores how the digital ecosystem presents particular challenges for transfer, as students must take what they have learned in one class and use it not only in other classes but also across media (“Pedagogy” 36). The development of student agency, then, is both more required and more challenging in the context of digital pedagogy.

Many assignments in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* build agency by affording students the opportunity to exert control over the material to be learned, such as Whitney Trettien’s course [Cut/Copy/Paste: Remixing Words](#) in the keyword “[Reading](#),” which invites students to actively take apart and remix texts for a better understanding rather than passively consuming them. Other objects of student control include technology, in the “[Open API Twitterbot](#)” found in the keyword “[Open](#)”; media, in the “[Course Assignment and Project Timeline – Rhetoric of Memes](#)” found in the keyword “[Multimodal](#)”; their own data, in the “[Consent of Disclosure of Education Record](#)” in the keyword “[Labor](#)”; history, in the “[Lying about the Past](#)” assignment in the keyword “[Praxis](#)”; and a variety of creations, such as those in the keyword “[Makerspaces](#).” The deformance assignment—a type of assignment where students push texts and technology to their breaking points—both demonstrates the hacking ethos common across digital pedagogy and offers students opportunities to use digital tools in creative ways. For examples of this type of assignment, see the artifacts “[Deformance as Remix](#)” in “[Interface](#),” “[Glitching Files for Understanding](#)” in “[Play](#),” and “[Micro-Project VI: Glitched Aberrations](#)” in “[Failure](#).”

Students may also gain a better understanding of their own agency by exploring other sources of control in the creative process. An assignment built around the “[Digital Edition](#)” of Herman Melville’s *Typee*, an artifact described in the keyword “[Authorship](#),” lays bare different sources of power (publisher, editions) within the publication process, while the artifacts “[Introduction to Digital Humanities](#)” and “[Data Critique](#)” in the keyword “[Information](#)” make clear how data structures and the choices made when organizing information exert control over how that information is later understood.

Finally, several assignments also uncover how technology might impinge on student agency. The keyword “[Online](#)” explicitly sets open learning environments against the tyranny of the learning management system, a technology that, as Jim Groom and Brian Lamb argue in “[Reclaiming Innovation](#),” constrains learning into silos and inhibits creativity. In “Loop Assignment” in the keyword “[Video](#)” the platform Instagram and the smartphone become authors in the creation of postindustrial video, while the keyword “[Reading](#)” points to the ways in which machines read people. Examining how these alternate locations for agency may affect personal control and efficacy can help students better negotiate such pressures.

This emphasis on student agency within digital pedagogy aligns with a variety of curricular innovations in higher education that fall under the rubric of student-centered learning, a pedagogical approach that Danica Savonick and Lisa Tagliaferri, in “[Building a Student-Centered \(Digital\) Learning Community with Undergraduates](#),” link to calls by

Paulo Freire and bell hooks to overturn the traditional hierarchy of the classroom and give students autonomy. Student agency in the context of digital pedagogy requires that students have access to and are able to deploy control over their own learning so that they are prepared to learn beyond the formal structures of higher education.

The key concepts of openness and collaboration in digital pedagogy highlighted above set the stage for teaching practices that facilitate the breakdown of traditional hierarchies in the classroom and empower students to take direct control of their learning. Specific strategies for reversing the instructor-student hierarchy include the cocreation of course elements, such as assignments (“[ds106 Assignment Bank Creator](#)” in the keyword “[Online](#)”), parts of the syllabus (“[Syllabus: American Carnival](#)” in the keyword “[Assessment](#)”), rules for engaging with challenging course materials (“[Community Agreements](#)” in the keyword “[Sexuality](#)”), or even the whole learning experience (“[Peeragogy Handbook](#)” in the keyword “[Network](#)”).⁸ These practices prepare students to be lifelong learners who can drive their own education outside of formal settings.

Identity

Identity emerges as a key theme in digital pedagogy because of the many opportunities digital environments offer for demonstrating identity and the preoccupation of teens and young adults with establishing their own identity.

danah boyd has argued that teens continually try out different identities in networked spaces. Though this practice is common to this age group in analog contexts as well, boyd explores how digital affordances exacerbate this tendency by offering more opportunities to try different identities, preserving those attempts, and increasing the risk of context collapse (29–53). Although preoccupation with identity is prevalent among teens and young adults, the changing world of work, in which adults are likely to shift careers multiple times during their lives, means that identity is not just a concern of the young.

The artifacts “[The Selfie Course](#)” in the keyword “[Affect](#)” and “[Wasting Time on the Internet](#)” in the keyword “[Open](#)” and the discussion of the development of student voice in the keyword “[Blogging](#)” all explore the construction of identity in digital contexts. A number of assignments ask students to express their identities across digital media, such as two examples from the keyword “[Iteration](#),” “[Social Media Bios](#)” and “[Words and Images ‘Notes’ and ‘Bios](#),” the latter of which asks students to introduce themselves in words, punctuation, and emoji. The creation of an ORCID profile, as described in the keyword “[Professionalization](#),” and of student work for public audiences, as described in the keyword “[Public](#),” also brings attention to the career implications of digital identities.

⁸ Similarly, Savonick and Tagliaferri build opportunities for student control into the platform on which their student-centered community interacts.

Digital pedagogy takes advantage of the opportunities for identity development to build student agency. The assignment “[Identity Text](#)” in the keyword “[Language Learning](#)” helps students develop agency to control their own learning process when it explicitly asks students to reflect on their identity as a language learner. Other assignments invite students to express their own identity, as in the personal narratives described in the keyword “[Storytelling](#),” the collection of learning artifacts and reflection in the keyword “[ePortfolio](#),” and the establishment of personal cyberinfrastructures (as Gardner Campbell advocates in “[A Personal Cyberinfrastructure](#)”), a goal of the [Domain of One’s Own](#) initiative described in the keyword “[Public](#).”

A number of keywords explore the complexity of identity: “[Intersectionality](#)” explicates the interplay of identity categories, while keywords like “[Diaspora](#),” “[Digital Divides](#),” “[Disability](#),” “[Futures](#),” “[Gender](#),” “[Indigenous](#),” “[Queer](#),” “[Race](#),” “[Sexuality](#),” and “[Social Justice](#)” explore the intersection of these categories with the digital and each other. These keywords highlight content and assignments that give students access to the points of view and experiences connected to these identities, such as “[Invisible Australians: The Real Face of White Australia](#)” in the keyword “[Race](#).” In the assignment “[Where the Red Receives Me](#)” in the keyword “[Indigenous](#),” remediation of a poem into a [Twine](#) interactive game helps a student explore indigenous use of family and community stories in building identity and the power of the digital to revitalize this practice. By exploring others’ identities, digital pedagogy opens students up to thinking about their own. “[Selfie Syllabus Week Four: Sexuality, Dating, and Gender](#)” in the keyword “[Sexuality](#)” gives one example of identities played out in networked publics through digital self-representation. The assignment “[iLogs](#)” in the keyword “[Queer](#)” asks students to document their identity as they encounter a variety of texts, theories, and ideas in an LGBTQ studies class. Games like “Hugpunx” and “[Mainichi](#)” in “[Gaming](#),” “[Lim](#)” in “[Queer](#),” and “[Falling Up](#)” in “[Collaboration](#)” allow students to participate in experiences from the point of view of identities that may be very different from their own. Other assignments, such as those in the keywords “[Access](#)” and “[Design](#),” encourage students to think and design from the point of view of others. Assignments in “[Community College](#)” explore ways that digital projects can empower students to represent their own identities and community. Here, digital pedagogy operates by interrogating systems; by exploring rules, as in “[Understanding Intersectionality through Critical Game Design](#)” and “[Power to the People: Anti-Oppressive Game Design](#)” in the keyword “[Gaming](#)”; by pushing boundaries, as with the deformance assignment; and by using defamiliarization offered by the digital to uncover privilege, politics, and lack of neutrality.

Obstacles, Objections, and Effective Practices

While digital pedagogy offers an abundance of constructive learning opportunities, many instructors come to the prospect of digital teaching and learning with a series of “buts”—objections to the incorporation of technology into the classroom. These protests, too, are part of the digital pedagogy conversation. To effectively and intentionally adopt digital pedagogical practices, instructors must answer these objections for themselves, and sometimes for their colleagues, as Shawna Ross and Claire Battershill make clear in *Using Digital Humanities in the Classroom*. Ross and Battershill offer practical advice that includes preparation for many of the issues, obstacles, and resistance faced by practitioners of digital pedagogy. Because the editors have discussed *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* in different forums, we have often encountered these objections. We take the opportunity now to answer each of them in turn with effective practices.

Imagine with us the audience member who raises a hand at a workshop or presentation on digital pedagogy to voice an objection: “[BUT . . . what about FERPA?! BUT . . . what about tenure and promotion?! BUT . . . how will I find the time?! BUT . . . what about intellectual property?! BUT . . . how will this be assessed?!](#)” While we present these concerns in a tongue-in-cheek manner, we also recognize that, with the increasing demands on faculty workloads, all of these objections can become real barriers to the adoption of digital pedagogy; they represent real and present obligations that instructors must navigate, taking more time out of already-full schedules to do so. By answering these objections here and offering strategies and models drawn from the collection to overcome them, we intend to make digital pedagogy more feasible for all instructors.

BUT . . . FERPA!

“How can students do work openly online and still comply with FERPA?”

While [openness](#) is a key concept underlying digital pedagogy, the idea of open pedagogy challenges traditional academic structures and policies. One of the most common objections raised to open pedagogy is concern for FERPA (the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#)), a United States federal law that governs what and how student information can be made public (“What Is FERPA?”).⁹

The basic objection this law presents to openness is that student work done in public may compromise the privacy of student data. Both the “[Hybrid](#)” and “[Public](#)” keywords include as an artifact Kevin Smith’s *HASTAC* post, “[Guidelines for Public, Student Class Blogs: Ethics, Legalities, FERPA and More](#),” which reviews effective practices for having students complete public assignments on blogs or other social media. Smith recommends that students be told about the public assignment up front, that they be

⁹ More recently, the General Data Protection Regulation addressed data privacy for citizens of the European Union (see Grama).

allowed to post anonymously if desired, that the instructor remind them not to post private information (which entails teaching them what that information is), and that they be given an alternate assignment if they still do not want to post publicly.

Many FERPA-related objections to open digital pedagogy are the result of an institutionally based, risk-averse approach to implementing FERPA that calls for keeping all student work private. While FERPA restricts academic institutions and the faculty members who work for them from sharing students’ educational and personal records openly, it does not and should not prevent students and faculty members from working in public and semipublic spaces, such as open course blogs. It is true that instructors are not allowed to post student grades in such spaces or perform evaluative grading work in public ways (since that could amount to the sharing of student records if real student names are used), but many FERPA-related objections reflect, at their core, a culture of fear grounded in the inherent conservatism of institutions concerned about potential legal actions. As long as instructors are not sharing private student information in public ways and are not sharing grades or evaluations in public spaces, instructors may push back against such conservative institutional pressures. Such pushback has led, in many spaces, to the establishment of institution-wide public and semipublic teaching spaces such as [UMW Blogs](#) at the University of Mary Washington, the [CUNY Academic Commons](#) at the City University of New York, [Blogs@Baruch](#) at Baruch College, and the [OpenLab](#) at the New York City College of Technology. Such examples—and the privacy policies and terms of service documents that undergird them—offer positive examples that other institutions might emulate.

Because practitioners of digital pedagogy have had to address privacy laws and policies directly, many of the keywords in this collection highlight ways that open digital pedagogy can help students better understand issues of privacy. In the keyword “[Public](#),” Jeff McClurken emphasizes that it is important to teach students about the implications of their public digital identities, while in the keyword “[Hybrid](#),” Jesse Stommel and Sean Michael Morris emphasize the importance of student agency in making determinations about privacy. By asking students to review the privacy statement for a social media site and record the results in a *Google Sheets* spreadsheet collaboratively populated by the class, the “[Privacy Assignment](#)” in the keyword “[Hashtag](#)” raises students’ awareness about how their data is used and shared. Likewise, the keyword “[Labor](#)” includes an artifact that makes student choices about data privacy concrete in the form of the “[Consent of Disclosure of Education Record](#).” This form gives students three choices for completing an assignment, choices that allow them to determine their desired level of privacy and officially record that choice. The form also gives the instructor a mechanism for documenting student choice. In the end, instructors can empower students to control their own data by teaching them about the implications of that control and allowing them to exercise it.

BUT . . . I don't have time!

“I can't take time away from my course content to teach students how to use digital tools—our semesters are already overloaded! And, besides, I don't have time to learn how to use new tools myself and can't teach what I don't know!”

Many instructors get excited when they first hear about a new technology or digital methodology that can be used for teaching and learning in their discipline but are then daunted when they begin to consider the time it will take them to integrate and implement it. We recommend instructors consider both how the tool, methodology, or assignment fits with the overall design of their course and how mode of instruction can reduce time demands on the instructor.

In any course, from general education to undergraduate senior seminars, the first consideration is time allotted for coverage of required content. While introducing digital tools may seem to reduce in-class time for covering content, we suggest that instructors see the introduction of digital tools as an opportunity to extend learning beyond the classroom and to move away from a faculty-centered classroom model. By allowing students to teach each other and to experiment with new forms of technology that they discover on their own, instructors can create space for [student agency](#) in their classrooms without necessarily reducing content coverage.¹⁰

In order to use digital tools effectively, instructors should begin by establishing student learning outcomes, deciding how students will be assessed, and creating assignments that prepare students for this work. As Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe explain, this “backward design,” where goals and assessment come before selection of content and assignments, can help instructors make better use of available time in their course. For example, in the collaborative research assignment “[Wheaton College Digital History Project](#)” (“[Curation](#)”), Kathryn Tomasek had to prioritize learning outcomes when her students transcribed and marked up primary-source documents in accordance with the standards of the Text Encoding Initiative. Rather than having students learn XML tags and use of the *Oxygen XML Editor*, Tomasek decided that learning to extract and organize data from primary sources was more important, so she had her students input the terms to be marked up into a *Google Sheets* spreadsheet, which saved valuable class time that would have been taken up learning a new technological tool. Instructors should carefully distinguish what they want students to learn before considering which tools best accomplish that goal.

¹⁰ See the [TAPoR](#) curated list of tools (which supplants the previous *DiRT Directory*). See also *The Programming Historian's* “[Lesson Index](#).”

BUT . . . where do I start?

“I don’t have the capacity and resources to assign big projects!”

Digital pedagogy work that gets published or presented at conferences often consists of large-scale digital projects that require significant investment of time, but digital pedagogy can also happen at smaller scales, such as a “bloom and fade” assignment, a low-stakes, ungraded exercise that both demonstrates a critical thinking objective and introduces a new tool for students’ use. In their chapter on designing classroom activities, Ross and Battershill offer pedagogical advice on constructing exploratory activities ranging in length from ten minutes to a full week. Small-scale exploratory activities can easily be fit into a single class meeting and allow instructors to test-drive digital pedagogy without committing to a graded assignment. Here we take an approach similar to Jim Lang’s in *Small Teaching: Everyday Lessons from the Science of Learning*, advising incremental changes that can be immediately applied in a course. “Bloom and fade” assignments allow students an initial level of experimentation without the risk that comes with grades. For instance, the in-class exercises listed in the syllabus “[Cut/Copy/Paste: Remixing Words](#)” in the keyword “[Reading](#)” supply a variety of such activities, ranging from cut-up poems (where students cut apart and recombine texts to form new ones) to playing with [Google Books Ngram Viewer](#) (see Harris, “Fun”), which allows users to track word usage longitudinally across the *GoogleBooks* corpus, or [TAPoR](#), a suite of tools for computer-assisted text analysis. Such exercises allow students to use a tool, discuss its limitations, engage in disciplinary vocabulary (such as *corpus* and *topic modeling*), and investigate the tool during a class session with instructor guidance. Many syllabi and other artifacts in the *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* collection can be similarly mined for graded assignments that can be converted into exploratory bloom-and-fade in-class activities.

BUT . . . how do I scaffold?

“I have big ideas, but I don’t know how to fit them into my class.”

Even those faculty members who are ready to try something big may be unsure how to go about it. And students often have trouble staying on track with large, high-stakes assignments, especially those that take up a significant part of the semester. The key to managing this work is considering how to break it up into manageable chunks and gradually build the skills and knowledge students need to complete such projects. In other words, instructors need to scaffold the work.

For the “[Wheaton College Digital History Project](#)” (included in the keyword “[Curation](#)”), Kathryn Tomasek addresses this challenge by creating a four-part collaborative research assignment that divides out student contributions to her ongoing research project, an electronic archive. In addition to building the archive, each stage of the assignment further develops the skills students need to do original research in primary

sources for their senior capstone, a course to be taken later in the major. While Tomasek’s project has lasted far beyond the boundaries of a single semester, she has been able to integrate assignments into multiple different courses, moving her research project forward, albeit at a slower pace (Tomasek, “Is It Out There?”).

Instructors new to digital pedagogy can also benefit from slow scaffolding of teaching practices. As they grow more comfortable, they might build on [“bloom and fade” assignments](#) to develop larger, multipart assignments. For example, the assignment [“Team Project Description for English 203 \(Hamlet in the Humanities Lab\)”](#) in the keyword [“Text Analysis”](#) has two phases. In the first, students work in groups to apply a text-analysis tool, and in the second, groups recombine so that students who were learning a tool in the first round become experts to teach other students in the second round. This strategy brings the added benefit of sharing responsibility for teaching new technologies across the class rather than having it rest solely with the instructor. Also, taking on the [identity](#) of an expert may bolster the confidence and therefore the agency of those students. After repeated iterations, instructors may build to the semester-long, scaffolded assignment.

Due to its complexity, the feasibility of this type of project depends upon scalability, especially for those faculty members who teach large courses or have multiple courses to prepare each semester or quarter.¹¹ In addition to scaffolding, the semester-long, project-based assignment introduces other complexities for the instructor to manage as they coordinate logistical issues and student collaboration. Tomasek collaborated with Rebecca Frost Davis to create the [“Process Checklist for Integrating Digital Humanities Projects into Courses”](#) based on her experience integrating the “Wheaton College Digital History Project” into her undergraduate courses (Davis and Tomasek). In addition to connecting the course with the project and scaffolding the work, the checklist addresses the areas of collaborative teaching and project logistics. Coordinating guest instructors from the library and technology services as well as lab space for digital work requires planning well before the semester starts.

Once the project starts, instructors also need to manage students as project personnel. Toniesha Taylor draws on project management practices to handle this challenge. For her digital archive project listed on the [“Advanced Writing for the Discipline Syllabus”](#) in the keyword [“Social Justice,”](#) students create group contracts where they specify their team roles, tools to be used, project milestones, and the deliverables of their group project. The artifact [“Group Contract \(COMM 4543\)”](#) in the keyword [“Social Justice”](#) provides one example of such a contract produced by students. These contracts are roughly equivalent to the project charters included in the [“Project Management”](#) keyword and introduce students to this standard practice of project management. The additional burden of coordinating project personnel means that instructors need to think carefully about time commitment before integrating a complex digital project into their course.

¹¹ See Miriam Posner’s [“Scaling Up DH101.”](#)

BUT . . . what about grading?

“I have no idea how to assess digital work!”

Assignments completed in new-media and digital formats often present challenges for instructors accustomed to grading traditional essays because they are unfamiliar with digital outputs by students. This collection includes or links to examples of student work, like the videos “[Identity Text](#)” in the keyword “[Language Learning](#)” and “[Where the Buffalo Roam](#)” in the keyword “[Multimodal](#),” to give instructors some idea of what students might produce in response to digital assignments.

The keyword “[Assessment](#)” also explores a variety of assessment practices in the digital context, including assessment design, communication, process, participation, inquiry and professional development, integration, and technology. Reflection about learning can be a useful tool for instructors struggling to assess the product of a digital assignment because it can shift attention to students’ process and thinking during the assignment rather than the final product. In addition to models of reflection in the keywords “[Assessment](#)” and “[ePortfolio](#),” see the “[World Literature Timeline](#)” assignment in the keyword “[Labor](#),” which includes a five-hundred-word reflection on the creation of the timeline and student learning through that creation. Other digital assignments, like “[Encoding Challenge, INF 2331H: The Future of the Book \(Winter 2016\)](#)” in the keyword “[Curation](#),” include a requirement that students document their design choices and the reasoning behind them.

A new type of assignment requires a strategy for grading that articulates clear goals, purposes, and expectations. As the [Transparency in Learning and Teaching project](#) has demonstrated, openness about grading criteria and the learning process can help mitigate assessment challenges by bringing all students to a similar starting line and giving them the how-to knowledge they need to succeed (Winkelmes 3). *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* includes multiple rubrics (findable through the tag “[rubric](#)”) for assessing a variety of assignment types, such as the “[Historical Twine Project Rubric](#)” in the keyword “[History](#),” which gives criteria for evaluating student-created interactive games. Even where the artifact is an assignment rather than a rubric, there is often a rubric attached. For example, Katherine D. Harris uses AAC&U’s [Teamwork VALUE Rubric](#) to help her students recognize the skills they are learning as they complete the “[Rare Materials Collaborative Undergraduate Research Project](#)” (“[Interface](#)” keyword). This rubric delineates criteria for assessing teamwork and outlines what work would look like at different levels from benchmark to capstone for each criterion. Instructors can align different assignments to different levels on the scale and focus on a particular criterion, or they can use the rubric for more holistic communication with students about teamwork skills. Importantly, this rubric is “designed to measure the quality of a **process**, rather than the quality of an **end product**” (AAC&U); thus, it aligns well with the practice of surfacing process through reflection

described above. Rubrics, then, can be a tool for instructional design, for communicating with students, and for assessment.

BUT . . . what if my students are resistant?

“My students might hate using digital tools, especially if they will run into obstacles and failures in the process!”

Digital pedagogy requires rethinking curricula, student learning outcomes, and assessment. It’s not just about the use of flashy tools. The instructor must be committed to revision and, perhaps, to some struggle along with students.

Student resistance may stem from a number of factors. While instructors sometimes assume that students are “digital natives,” research in multiple studies shows that the last two generations of students are high-functioning consumers and users of digital technology rather than fluent, critical users of digital tools (see [“The Digital-Native Debate”](#) [Lieberman]). For this reason, instructors may want to embed user strategies and evaluation techniques when employing digital pedagogy. For instance, in a video tutorial, Diego Bonilla takes a step back to articulate strategies for [“Reading on Electronic Devices.”](#) Or perhaps students need further practice annotating a print page—see Mark Sample’s assignment [“Investigation”](#) (Oscar Wao).”

Though instructors should account for learning curves, they should encourage a critical perspective among their students that will help students understand both the possibilities and the limits of the tools they use, along with a data-literacy perspective that encourages critical thinking around issues of privacy and surveillance.

BUT . . . does digital pedagogy count?

“Digital pedagogy won’t count towards promotion, tenure, or advancement!”

Despite all of the enthusiasm surrounding use of digital tools, the encouragement by professional-development entities on campuses, and the discussions in higher education circles, the deployment of any digital pedagogical practice impacts workload and, potentially, professional advancement. To buttress against negative consequences of experimenting with digital pedagogy, and because each institutional context is local, we propose some strategies for assessing your institutional culture and for recording, reflecting on, and advocating for these types of innovative pedagogical strategies:

- Discuss the change with your chair.
- Work with an instructional designer or a center for teaching and learning, if you’ve got one.
- Assess the technology available on campus.
- Assess student access to technology.

- Seek out faculty members on campus who are integrating technology with their pedagogy.
- Keep versions of your syllabi for comparison in your yearly review materials.
- Be prepared with an “elevator speech” about how technology altered the learning outcomes in the classroom.

The final suggestion is perhaps the most difficult, because instructor enthusiasm sometimes leads to lengthy explanations about specific assignments, course restructuring, or larger curricular implications. Though the actual language used in describing these pedagogical turns is usually conveyed through reflective essays, professional-advancement documentation must consider an administrative audience, one that may not already be familiar with the discipline or pedagogical innovations.

Explanations for digital pedagogy work can take a cue from some recently posted materials for professional advancement in new-media and digital humanities work by borrowing the language, structure, and definitions included in these materials. For instance, see [“Closing the Evaluation Gap,”](#) which points to actual professional-advancement reports written by humanities scholars (Cohen and Troyano). In another instance, those implementing digital pedagogy might be beholden to institutional qualitative and quantitative student evaluations in which students may have portrayed the curricular revisions as unsuccessful. In these cases, it’s important to provide your own reflections on implementing digital pedagogy into your curriculum in your professional-advancement materials; for example, see [“Moving up the Professional Ladder – Promotion Narrative for Full Professor”](#) (Harris). Though these examples are not meant to privilege tenure-line or tenure-track positions, the actual language provided might be of use to all practitioners of digital pedagogy.

BUT . . . this all sounds daunting!

“I’m overwhelmed! Is this really feasible?”

Throughout this section we have provided a great deal of tactical advice on implementing digital pedagogy in the classroom; in conclusion, we now offer the following set of strategic guidelines:

- Choose an assignment or course that you will be able to teach a second, third, and fourth time so that you can revise each time based on outcomes and feedback.
- Economize across courses: pick one tool or one assignment that can be used across your multiple courses. Don’t do multiple new things in a single semester.
- If you are new to digital pedagogy, start small with a single assignment.
- If you are ready to go bigger, be sure to scaffold your assignments and rewrite your grading rubrics.
- Chronicle where you and your students didn’t meet the projected outcomes.

- Leave room in the syllabus for a “skills day”—or a short technology-related lesson on multiple days—to provide instruction on digital tools and to check in with students to see whether they are encountering problems.
- Have students continually reflect on the process: in the middle, after each skills set—not only at the end of the semester.
- Have students work with each other; they’ll teach each other things you won’t know (or don’t need to know).
- Assess and revise the department-mandated learning goals (or student learning outcomes) and add them to your syllabus in the appropriate language.

If embarking on a digital pedagogy adventure still sounds daunting and there is no instructional designer on campus to help with the process, begin with a simple journal exercise to brainstorm about student learning goals. The prompts below are designed as a step-by-step guide to help instructors begin this process:

1. What is the intended knowledge acquisition with this assignment?
2. How will students demonstrate this knowledge acquisition?
3. How will you demonstrate the value of process over end product?
4. How will you evaluate collaboration (see the [Teamwork VALUE Rubric](#))?
5. Will peer review or comments be incorporated into the assignment?
6. Are the process and the outcome public to the world or just to the students?
7. Where does the assignment fit into the semester (first assignment, last assignment, etc.)?
8. How does the assignment fit with your larger goals for the course?
9. How will you build on the knowledge or skills developed in this assignment?
10. What resources are required to complete the assignment (for example, access to subscription databases)?
11. What technical proficiencies are required of the student?
12. Will a lab day be required for learning technologies or presenting the process or final projects? (If so, make sure to leave time in the schedule.)
13. Will the work be done in class or out of class?
14. How will you engage with this assignment’s process and outcomes during class discussion?
15. Have you left room for waypoints or check-in moments for the assignment (especially relevant for assignments that come later in the semester or require several steps)?
16. How does this assignment differ from previous assignments that don’t use technology?
17. Can you boil the project down to a single research question for your students?

Doubtless, readers of this collection will encounter additional “buts” and may come up with some of their own. We encourage continued brainstorming about how to counter objections to creative and critical digital pedagogy and continued conversation through the [#curateteaching](#) and [#citepedagogy](#) hashtags.

History of the Development of Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities

The idea for this project as a curated collection of pedagogical artifacts first emerged within the digital pedagogy conversation in late 2010, when Jentery Sayers (who would become one of the four project editors) created a forum thread on *Digital Humanities Questions and Answers* titled “[How Do We Introduce Undergraduates to the Digital Humanities?](#)” His request for “Example courses? Syllabi? Sites? Projects? Lessons? Prompts?” received twenty responses over two years that ranged from discussing teaching students to code to articulating that the contributor doesn’t teach digital humanities but instead employs a “DH style.” Many of the responses include links to teaching materials, syllabi, assignments, prompts, and readings. At this same time, conversations about teaching digital humanities and a “DH style” were being shared on *Twitter* in such an ephemeral way (before *Twitter* created the ability to quote, link, or save a tweet) that most of the teaching materials being offered disappeared in the flood of the *Twitter* stream. Sayers’s query on *Digital Humanities Questions and Answers* was one response to the ephemerality of conversation in social media, an attempt to gather pedagogical materials and suggestions in one place. With interest around digital humanities as a field growing among humanities faculty and the lack of a stable, user-friendly, searchable repository for teaching materials, many faculty members at teaching-intensive universities craved “DH style” examples that they could trust.¹²

This initial moment illustrates a number of the issues that prompted the creation of *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*. There is an obvious appetite for the digital pedagogy conversation, one that finds fertile ground with the digital humanities community. At the same time, digital pedagogy is not the same thing as teaching digital humanities and risks getting lost in that context. Without a clear scholarly infrastructure,

¹² The field has engaged in a lengthy debate about the definition of *digital humanities*—a debate outside the scope of this collection. Instead, we offer a quick set of definitions and resources: Digital humanities is an area of research, teaching, and creation concerned with the intersection of computing and humanities research questions. Developed from an earlier field called humanities computing, today, digital humanities embraces a variety of topics ranging from curating online collections to data mining large cultural data sets. Digital humanities currently incorporates both digitized and born-digital materials and combines methodologies from the traditional humanities disciplines (such as history, philosophy, linguistics, literature, art history, archaeology, music, and cultural studies) with tools provided by computing (such as data visualization, information retrieval, text encoding, data mining, statistics, and computational analysis) and digital publishing. For an introduction to the field, see *Wikipedia*’s definition in “[Digital Humanities](#)” and [Kirschenbaum](#)’s definition and explanation of the field’s origin. *Defining Digital Humanities*, edited by Melissa Terras, Julianne Nyhan, and Edward Vanhoutte, and *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Gold) provide overviews of the field’s formation in the period 2004–12 through excerpts and chapters by digital humanities scholars. See also Steven E. Jones’s *The Emergence of the Digital Humanities*; Susan [Schreibman, Ray Siemens, and John Unsworth](#)’s *Companion to Digital Humanities*; and articles in publication venues such as *Digital Humanities Quarterly*.

digital pedagogy also faced challenges in preserving and effectively sharing the teaching materials that constitute it. If those teaching materials could somehow be recognized as a form of scholarship, faculty members might be more open to sharing their own pedagogical materials without having to create an online presence or maintain a Web site.

These needs—to amplify the digital pedagogy conversation, to recognize digital pedagogy apart from digital humanities, and to establish a scholarly infrastructure for organizing, preserving, sharing, and giving authority to digital pedagogy materials—are the inspiration for *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*, which came together as a project with Jentery Sayers, Katherine D. Harris, Matthew K. Gold, and Rebecca Frost Davis as editors in 2012. Nicky Agate, at the time the managing editor of *MLA Commons*, discusses the project’s origin and direction in her 2015 [interview](#) with the four editors. In this section we briefly review and highlight how these needs shaped the project’s development.

Digital Pedagogy within Digital Humanities

The fervor for digital humanities and the community around it provided multiple opportunities for practitioners of digital pedagogy to raise their voices and foster new practices. For example, in 2005, Melissa Terras called for a recognition of pedagogy within digital humanities in her Digital Humanities Conference keynote and subsequent 2006 article based on a review of digital humanities programs, projects, and syllabi. The multi-institutional “[Looking for Whitman](#)” project, led by Matthew K. Gold and funded by National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Office of Digital Humanities grants in 2008 and 2009, involved institutions not typically included in digital humanities work—New York City College of Technology, Rutgers University–Camden, and University of Mary Washington (in addition to New York University)—and focused on student experience rather than research. At the [National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education \(NITLE\)](#), a nonprofit initiative dedicated to advancing learning through the effective use of digital technologies in liberal arts colleges, Rebecca Frost Davis organized well-attended webinars on digital humanities that became conversations more about digital pedagogy.¹³

The 2011 MLA convention panel on “The Future and History of Digital Humanities,” organized by Kathleen Fitzpatrick, included Katherine D. Harris as the representative for teaching-intensive institutions (see Harris, “[In/Out](#)”). Though that panel is often remembered as the genesis of a significant debate about whether digital humanists should know how to code,¹⁴ the MLA 2011 moment also offered space to discuss the

¹³ Davis and Lisa Spiro’s leadership at NITLE heralded a widespread audience of liberal arts faculty. NITLE closed in 2018; the 2012 webinar that demonstrated a focus on digital pedagogy is captured in Katherine D. Harris’s blog post “[NITLE Digital Pedagogy Seminar](#)” and in a series of posts in the category “Techne” on Davis’s blog that mirrors [NITLE’s Techne blog](#) before NITLE went dark (“Techne”).

¹⁴ Much of this conversation was generated by a 2010 talk, “[The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books](#),” in which Stephen Ramsay declares that an approach centered

relationship of digital humanities with pedagogy as a component essential to the growth of a field that was built on many other pedagogical disciplinary experiments, structures, and innovations. Lisa Spiro’s Digital Humanities 2011 conference presentation “[Making Sense of 134 DH Syllabi](#)” continued the thread of discovering curricular innovation, which has remained a part of the digital humanities community. Harris, Sayers, and Diane Jakacki had a chance to test digital pedagogy’s importance to digital humanities at the [2012 Digital Humanities Summer Institute](#) (DHSI) with the first “Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities” weeklong workshop (“Participants”).¹⁵ The key innovation here was a focus on pedagogy and a growing sense that pedagogy must be recognized as part of digital humanities work. This recognition made the digital humanities community a perfect host for discussions about digital pedagogy.

Digital Pedagogy beyond Digital Humanities

Even as it flourishes within digital humanities, digital pedagogy lives beyond it, as well. The use of digital tools, methods, and materials in humanities curricula predates digital humanities, as the fifteen-minute documentary “[Hypertext: an Educational Experiment in English and Computer Science at Brown University](#),” filmed in 1976 and now available on the *Internet Archive*, demonstrates (Van Dam). This video highlights the relationship between literature and use of computers to inspire an investigative gymnastics of poetry. The film interviews a faculty member along with several students, many of whom proclaim that they thought computers would make the study of literature “cold.” However, students found themselves fascinated when they used hypertext to mark up poems in groups, developing research and shared knowledge. The students felt the emotion of the poetic resonance even on the screen because of the intimate encounter with words they experienced as they explored language, form, and meaning through the computer. As quoted in the [final report](#), one project team member noted:

around playfulness and experimentation is key to exploring digital collections. For Ramsay, being an academic promises, even requires, unbounded playing and learning in order to achieve cultural literacy. See also Jentery Sayers’s discussion of “tinkering” as it resonates differently than “play” (“[Tinker-Centric Pedagogy](#)”). For a discussion about the ensuing conversations from Ramsay’s MLA 2011 remarks, see Gold, “[The Digital Humanities Moment](#)”; and Sample, “[The Digital Humanities Is Not about Building, It’s about Sharing](#).” Though Ramsay’s work disappeared along with his entire *WordPress* blog (some of which is available in Terras et al.), a continued discussion by Ramsay, Kathi Inman Berens, and others ensued on Brian Croxall’s course blog for Introduction to Digital Humanities in 2011, whereby Ramsay and Berens responded in the comments to the student Peter Marcinkowski’s post “[Why Is Knowing How to Code Necessary?](#)” Berens proposes that digital humanists stop looking to code or build and instead focus on experimentation, with the primary goal being close reading: “Critical reading is the heart of DH. It’s my sharpest tool, and not just because I’ve been honing it the longest. It slices away at so much clutter, revealing the sparkling gems hidden in the carbon.” See also Berens, “[Building](#).” During the explosion in conversation, the only places these discussions could flourish in real time were on *Twitter*, among blog posts, and at some conferences.

¹⁵ The resulting course Web site has subsequently been removed. See the course synopsis video created by the workshop participants, “[Digital Pedagogies Show and Tell Document 1](#).” [Hunter et al.](#) note in response to this and other workshops offered at the 2012 DHSI that “digital pedagogy may offer one of the best opportunities for the digital humanities to inform—and be informed by—other disciplines.”

I think that the communication that they had with one another on the system, commenting one another’s work, reading one another’s work, appreciating it, admiring it, criticizing it sometimes, generated a kind of rapport among the members of the group that is very unusual. I can think of no way that can be duplicated without a system of this kind. (Van Dam 12)

The 1976 film offers a testimonial that effectively celebrates key concepts of digital pedagogy in the form of play, practice, and collaboration, in the context of literary study by students.¹⁶

There are multiple examples in many different instances of humanities curricula employing technology, as with this 1976 example. Digital pedagogy is endemic to the humanities; it is not just one individual field. Examples like this one, that have been celebrated and then forgotten, are why we put together a collection that explores digital pedagogy across the humanities rather than just within digital humanities.

We also recognize that many who practice digital pedagogy do not consider themselves digital humanists. For example, much of the work in digital humanities pedagogy was built, perhaps unknowingly, on the foundation of digital rhetoric and the digirhet.org community, both of which encourage the development of community and critical analysis of technology within pedagogy (see DigiRhet.org, “[Teaching](#)”). Douglas Eyman explains in *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, and Practice*:

As the title [“Teaching Digital Rhetoric: Community, Critical Engagement, and Application”] indicates, our approach to teaching digital rhetoric focused on three key elements that we felt were foundational—understanding and developing a sense of community (as it is engaged both online and in the classroom itself), a focus on critical engagement with the technologies of production and delivery, and a method for developing facility with the applications that support the production of digital texts. (113)

We see the same emphases appearing in later conversations about pedagogy within the digital humanities, and this is but one example of a community outside of digital humanities where the digital pedagogy conversation also found a home.

Digital Pedagogy Struggling to Find Its Voice within Digital Humanities

¹⁶ The NEH offers some background on the film ([Sneesby-Koch](#)), and [Jennifer Howard provides a synopsis](#), both of which are helpful in understanding the history of computers and literary study, expressly in the face of the 2016 *Los Angeles Review of Books* article “[Neoliberal Tools \(and Archives\): A Political History of Digital Humanities](#),” which castigates digital humanities for its use of digital tools in research and scholarly pursuits in the humanities (Allington et al.).

We also see the need to address digital pedagogy beyond digital humanities, because it risks getting overshadowed in that context. Despite calls like that of Terras in 2005 to focus on pedagogy within digital humanities, pedagogy often takes a back seat to research. Luke Waltzer points out in “[Digital Humanities and the ‘Ugly Stepchildren’ of American Higher Education](#)” that perhaps digital humanities, at least during the 2011 MLA convention, was merely replicating an institutional hierarchy that is prevalent in much of American education:

[P]edagogy, curriculum development, and the scholarship of teaching and learning remain what Steve Brier has called ‘the ugly stepchildren of the university.’ Those particular paths of inquiry continue to be undervalued by institutions and less energetically pursued by academics than the discipline-based research with which the majority of humanists began their careers.

Waltzer declares that digital humanities has not “done enough to show how the values and lessons at the core of the field might reshape the role of the humanities in the university of the future.”¹⁷ While pedagogy is at the table, it risks getting lost in the shuffle. In essence, Waltzer is calling for digital humanities to take up the charge of digital pedagogy to develop an intentional teaching and learning infused with digital methods. Brett Hirsch’s 2013 edited volume, [Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles and Politics](#), begins some of this work to focus on the type of pedagogy that Waltzer highlights.

Waltzer’s call is part of a strengthening of the digital pedagogy conversation, which happens sometimes within and sometimes beyond the digital humanities community. Some of the issues pointed out by Terras, Waltzer, and Brier were addressed in the year following the 2011 MLA convention, done in such a way as to be inclusive, exploratory, productive, and exciting, including the establishment of [Hybrid Pedagogy](#) and [The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy](#)—both of which eschew the “digital humanities” designation in favor of focusing on technological innovations, failures, and advancements of pedagogy informed by hybrid and interactive technologies. With all of this conversation, a community dedicated to digital pedagogy was coming to the forefront and opening up a rich inquiry into the technological innovations of the moment, as illustrated by a precursor to the digital pedagogy conversation, Holly Willis’s 2010 video “[What Is Digital Pedagogy?](#)”

Similarly, Susannah McGowan, a HASTAC scholar, questions the need to designate herself a digital humanist and instead offers a teacher-scholar model to the conversation in “[Building an Understanding of Digital Humanities through Teaching](#)”:

I propose to start the dialogue here if you care to reflect on how your own research in digital humanities affects your teaching? What is it that you love

¹⁷ See also Stephen Brier’s 2012 assessment of digital humanities and its lack of pedagogical focus.

about the process of building that you then share with your students? Or if you are a student how are you interacting with digital humanities project[s] in the classroom?

Roger Whitson’s [review of THATCamp Pedagogy](#), also in 2011, heralds the first THATCamp to address digital pedagogy without needing to identify as part of digital humanities. Whitson views digital pedagogy as a parallel development that will have to consider its own politics in the face of professional-advancement politics similar to those encountered by digital humanities.

At the 2012 MLA convention, digital humanists did less self-definition and more outreach by inviting the non-digital-humanities community to a preconvention workshop and a digital pedagogy poster session.¹⁸ The primary imperative of the 2012 MLA convention was a call to those digi-curious to jump in, get their hands dirty with data, invite their students, and consider alternative academic careers. But many still struggled with defining digital humanities as a theory and methodology for their own work, including Stanley Fish in an extremely polemical series of articles for *The New York Times* (“[Digital Humanities](#)”; “[Mind Your P’s and B’s](#)”) that engaged with Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s then-new book, *Planned Obsolescence*, and Matthew K. Gold’s 2012 defining edited collection, *Debates in the Digital Humanities*.¹⁹ These debates about digital humanities sometimes overshadowed digital pedagogy and saw digital pedagogy trying to define its own place, which overlapped with digital humanities pedagogy only in

¹⁸ See Harris, “[Digital Pedagogy](#)” and “[Acceptance](#).” Digital pedagogy has had a regular presence at recent MLA conventions, including two electronic roundtables and digital poster sessions in 2012, “[Digital Pedagogy: An Electronic Roundtable](#),” organized by Harris (“[Acceptance](#)”), and “[Building Digital Humanities in the Undergraduate Classroom](#),” organized by Brian Croxall and Kathi Inman Berens (Croall, “Session Proposal”); sessions sponsored by the MLA Committee on Information Technology on “Games for Teaching Language, Literature, and Writing” in 2013 and “[Augmented Reality for Teaching and Learning in the Humanities](#)” in 2014; “[Digital Pedagogy: An Unconference Workshop](#),” organized by Croxall and Adeline Koh; and Jesse Stommel’s talk, “[Digital Pedagogy: A Genealogy](#),” at MLA 2015. At the 2016 convention, the editors of this project ran an electronic roundtable (i.e., digital poster session), “[Curating Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities](#)” (Davis et al., “Curating”), to enable curators to receive feedback on their emerging digital pedagogy keywords, altering the evolution of this project based on feedback from more than 150 attendees. The session also allowed attendees to suggest further keywords and expand the diversity of the collection. All of this activity lies in stark contrast to the premise of an article in *PC Magazine*, “[Digital Humanities: The Most Exciting Field You’ve Never Heard Of](#)” (Fenton), about an MLA 2017 roundtable, “[Curating Digital Pedagogy](#)” (Davis et al., “2017 Modern Language Association Convention”).

¹⁹ For an overview of the developments throughout 2012, see Battershill and Ross’s chapter “[Overcoming Resistance](#).”

part.²⁰ Likewise, movements like [minimal computing](#) have grown out of digital humanities conversations but have moved in separate directions.²¹

In “Doing DH in the Classroom,” Diane Jakacki and Katherine Faull cite the observation in the 2014 issue of *The CEA Critic* that digital humanities, even with the publication of the pedagogy-focused articles in Gold’s *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, seems to be missing the pedagogy conversation. Jakacki and Faull articulate that “[o]ne of the fundamental differences between digital *humanities* pedagogy and a more general integration of technology into the classroom lies in the intentionality of course learning goals; in other words, how we lead students to new forms of understanding through the methods of the digital humanities” (359). Here, they are responding to an implied critique that digital humanities pedagogy is merely teaching with technology and therefore not as valuable as “real” digital humanities. They counter that incorporating students into the field requires valuing pedagogy and moving past the hierarchy endemic to postsecondary education.

Up through 2019, digital humanities pedagogy has gained prominence with several print and digital collections of reflective essays, including *Teaching with Digital Humanities: Tools and Methods for Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Travis and DeSpain) and *Using Digital Humanities in the Classroom* (Battershill and Ross), along with its *Scalar* companion site, which articulates fully the numerous guides, definitions, and musings about teaching with digital humanities instead of teaching about digital humanities.²² While these scholar-teachers work within the digital humanities community, these repeated needs to defend and mark out the place for pedagogy indicate that the position of pedagogy is still contingent. By focusing on digital pedagogy within the humanities, our project seeks to carve out space for digital pedagogy both within and apart from digital humanities to preserve and extend crucial aspects of these conversations that might otherwise be overlooked.

²⁰ See these tweets from the June 2012 THATCamp Liberal Arts Colleges, which capture a Venn diagram for digital pedagogy, digital teaching, and digital humanities: [@emicic](#); [@FrostDavis](#).

²¹ The idea of “minimal computing” was born from a workshop and [working group for the Digital Humanities](#) 2014: “We use ‘minimal computing’ to refer to computing done under some set of significant constraints of hardware, software, education, network capacity, power, or other factors. Minimal computing includes both the maintenance, refurbishing, and use of machines to do DH work out of necessity along with the use of new streamlined computing hardware” (“About”).

²² See also the special issue of *Digital Humanities Quarterly* edited by [Murphy and Smith](#).

Scholarly Infrastructure for Digital Pedagogy

One reason that the voices of digital pedagogy might get missed is the weakness of a scholarly infrastructure that can authorize the statements of those voices embodied in the form of teaching and learning materials, what we call “pedagogical artifacts.” Our project builds on the seeds of such an infrastructure for digital pedagogy, but one that is not fully realized. For example, Project Bamboo and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation responded to this need with a 2008–2012 project focused on shared technology services.²³ The [CUNY Academic Commons](#) is a direct response to these types of teacher-scholar issues and allows virtual collaboration across twenty-five campuses. *Digital Humanities Questions and Answers* also very specifically responded to calls for an online community with a category labeled “[DH in the Classroom](#).” The digital humanities community on *Twitter* has been enormously useful for sharing syllabi, interesting assignments, and useful results, as has the [Zotero “Digital Humanities” group](#). The [2009](#) and [2010 Day in the Life of the Digital Humanities project](#) and all of its subsequent iterations, managed by Geoffrey Rockwell, allowed participants to write about teaching days. Since 2011, a number of online journals and repositories have been created to offer opportunities to share pedagogical artifacts, such as [Hybrid Pedagogy](#) (launched in 2011), [The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy](#) (first issue published in 2012), [TheJUMP+](#) (first issue published in 2010; relaunched in 2012), [Pedagogy Toolkit for English](#) (Christie; established in 2014), the [American Historical Association “Classroom Materials” repository](#), and [Prompt: A Journal of Academic Writing Assignments](#) (first issue published in 2016).

With a larger vision than a print anthology or repository of multimodal, disaggregated teaching materials, *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* evolved around the fervor for digital humanities that culminated in a watershed moment at the 2011 MLA Annual Convention. The concepts and ideals for this publication developed over several years, but that moment in January 2011 offered an opportunity to harness the energy around digital humanities and new publishing models in order to expand the conversation to make more apparent the value of student interactions with modes of digital learning, teaching, and scholarship. Out of this watershed moment, two of the editors, Harris and Sayers, came together to create a new type of publication for digital pedagogy and then invited Gold and Davis to join them in this project.

Building upon Fitzpatrick’s urgings to recognize process, collaboration, remixing, and gift economy in *Planned Obsolescence*, the four editors conceived of a peer-reviewed publication that advocates for teaching materials as representations of scholarship—and then shares those materials freely and openly to facilitate this gift economy. Through a collaboration with Fitzpatrick, who served as director of scholarly communication when this project was brought under contract at the MLA, and with many others at the MLA in the years since, including Nicky Agate and Anne Donlon, this

²³ See Dombrowski for a history of the project and a reflection on its failures.

project seeks to provide a new platform that is both a publication and an infrastructure for digital pedagogy.

Pedagogical Materials as Scholarship

A key challenge for this project has been the formalization of processes around sharing pedagogical materials. In 2012, as the editors were deciding on keywords, searching *Twitter* to find a wide variety of curators, and generally attempting to capture all of the innovative teaching materials, rubrics, syllabi, and assignments being made openly available online, the editors also discovered how ephemeral many of these materials were and how important they are to the future of pedagogical innovation. Instructors don't create courses in a vacuum and don't always have time to be innovative.

Forking

As Brian Croxall puts it in “[Forking Your Syllabus](#),” “good teaching often comes from adapting or stealing outright someone's great assignment, classroom activity, syllabus, or even lecture notes.” Remixing an assignment—taking something someone else has done and extending it in new directions—can be a smart move. Collaborating on, reusing, or remixing another instructor's assignment allows an instructor to integrate the successes and failures of another instructor's work. And it frees instructors from beta testing assignments for the first time with their own students.

In conversations that took place across blogs and *Twitter*, this phenomenon of reusing and adapting assignments has been called “forking,” a term from software development used to describe the development of the same code into different directions.²⁴ Without an established citational practice, however, there is little evidence of the remix, reuse, hacking, and revision that occurs in pedagogical circles.

Acknowledgments

Lisa Spiro highlighted a potential model for citation in her [Digital Humanities 2011 conference presentation](#) (“Knowing,” slide 43), where she shared the acknowledgments found on Rob MacDougall's [Digital History syllabus](#) that point to the course's origins in a version by William J. Turkel as well as borrowings from digital history courses by Jeremy Boggs, Amanda French, Jo Guldi, Mills Kelly, Jeffrey McClurken, Paula Petrick, William Thomas, and Ethan Watrall. In the absence of a formal citational system for syllabi, acknowledgments mark the intellectual rigor and scholarly communication involved in the construction of a syllabus, assignment, or rubric. Such acknowledgments might later be used by faculty members in their annual reviews to demonstrate their impact; acknowledgments can also help students understand that someone else has already tested the assignments and that a different set of students has already played around in these new forms. What it all amounts to is, in cultural heritage terms, provenance. As Harris explicates in her 2012 blog post “[Acknowledgments on Syllabi](#),”

²⁴ For further discussion of the term *forking*, see also Mullen.

formal citations establish the provenance for an idea, generate goodwill, and establish the influence of teaching innovations.

Although the acknowledgment was a salutary development, formal citations have rarely been used for teaching materials and were not part of the scholarly record. In a 2014 *ProfHacker* article, “[Citing Syllabi](#),” Konrad Lawson returned to the idea of a formalized process for reusing pedagogical materials. Lawson endorsed a number of practices that would support syllabus citation, such as posting syllabi to an online repository for preservation, indicating version and other metadata, and adding an open license; open licenses helpfully clarify whether a work can be reused or not and how it should be cited. Increasingly, instructors are adding formal licenses to their pedagogical materials, a practice which can augment and encourage citational practices. Licenses such as those provided by [Creative Commons](#) provide a legal framework for open sharing and acknowledgment (“Share Your Work”), thereby helping to formalize these two practices for pedagogical material.

Citational Practices

An examination of the use of such scholarly conventions in the pedagogical materials found in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* demonstrates how far these practices have evolved. The open sharing of pedagogical materials online has made their reuse and remixing more transparent so that the history of particular syllabi and assignments can often be traced.

The contrast between the scholarly treatment of two examples of assignments that are reused by multiple instructors highlights the benefits of citing pedagogical materials: 1) creating a Twitterbot based on *Google Sheets*, and 2) engaging students in a “privilege walk,” an activity that has students step forward or backward in response to a series of statements about privilege. The first example is the most common artifact in the collection—appearing four times, in the keywords “[History](#),” “[Open](#),” “[Play](#),” and “[Poetry](#)”—with its creator, Zach Whalen, clearly acknowledged in each case. By contrast, the provenance of the privilege walk activity is not so evident; while the activity itself has gone viral in the form of a *YouTube* video and instructions are readily available online, its origin is unclear. In fact, curator Toniesha Taylor was unable to include the first example of this activity she found for the keyword “[Social Justice](#)” because the instructor using it was not the original creator and could not grant permission. Instead, Taylor points to an early version published openly online and references several other examples (none of which point back to a common origin). While many students have learned from this activity, the original creator or creators may or may not be receiving credit for their innovation.

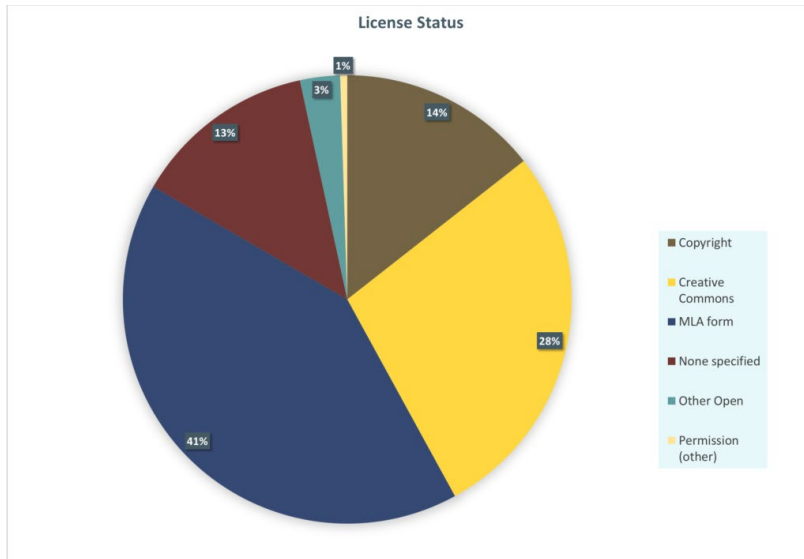
A number of other examples of forking appear throughout *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*. Kathi Inman Behrens points to one example with the artifact “[Visualizing Unread Victorian Novels](#)” in the keyword “[Interface](#),” in which Ryan Cordell adapts an assignment first described by Paul Fyfe in his article “How Not to Read a Victorian

Novel.” The assignment, “Commonplace Book Assignment” by Vimala Pasupathi, published in *The Journal of Interactive Technology and Pedagogy*, appears twice in the collection (in the keywords “[Authorship](#)” and “[Reading](#)”) but also appears in a version forked by Joseph Adelman (in the keyword “[Archive](#)”), which acknowledges its source in Pasupathi’s article. All of these examples stem from formal publication of assignments in journals, which enables forking with attribution because citation is a scholarly practice.

Assignments that are not part of formal publications may not be as easy to cite. We hope that with this project we can increase the value of such pedagogical materials themselves as both research and scholarship in part by citing them in a formal way. To model formal citation of pedagogical materials, each keyword includes a full citation of all its curated artifacts in its works-cited list.

Open Licensing

The use of open licensing on artifacts in this collection presents another way to evaluate the maturity of formal scholarly processes for pedagogical materials. The curation of pedagogical artifacts in *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* depends on the open sharing of teaching and learning materials by those who practice digital pedagogy. To fully realize the vision of this project, materials had to be formally shared under an open license so that they could be archived in the [MLA Humanities Commons repository](#). This requirement for formal publication presented a major hurdle to the project. Of the artifacts in the collection, 290, or forty-nine percent, were already openly published on the Web under some form of license, ranging from the most open Creative Commons license to personal copyright. For those that were unlicensed or under personal copyright, curators requested that the creator fill out a permission form created by the MLA for the project—which granted a [CC BY-NC](#) license, a Creative Commons license requiring attribution and allowing for noncommercial reuse of a licensed work (“Attribution”)—or that they place a license of equivalent openness on the artifact itself.



Ultimately, 244 artifacts, or forty-one percent, were licensed through the MLA permission form, while 163, twenty-eight percent, were otherwise licensed through a Creative Commons license; seventeen had some other form of open license; and the creators of three others granted permission in a different form. Another eighty-five, or fourteen percent, remain under some form of copyright or restrictive license, and seventy-eight, or thirteen percent, have no license specified. Both of these cases restrict reuse; the artifacts can only be captured by screenshot and referenced by URL. Several creators with works formally licensed under personal copyright (which does not explicitly allow for reuse) filled out the permission form to allow archiving of their work by the MLA in the [Humanities Commons](#) repository to enable reuse by others.

What does all this mean? While openness about digital pedagogy is a well-developed practice, strategies, like labeling material with permissions to enable that openness, still need work. Just over a quarter of artifacts were originally labeled with a license supporting reuse outside the impetus of this project. Creators of the other seventy-four percent may not have been aware of the need to license for reuse or may not have considered the formal labeling of pedagogical material important. This lack of formal gestures supporting reuse indicates an immature practice that discounts the value of developing innovative teaching materials in the profession. We encourage instructors to cite the sources for their teaching practice, to openly share their own pedagogy, and to label it with an open license, all of which will allow others to reuse pedagogical materials. The editors are proud that this project, through the MLA permissions process, supports that formal practice by prompting an open license on more than a third of the artifacts shared and hope this model will contribute to the maturing of pedagogical sharing across the humanities.

Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities: Structure and Approach

As noted in the [Getting Started](#) section above, each keyword consists of four parts:

- A curatorial statement, wherein the curator explains and contextualizes a keyword within digital pedagogy;
- Ten curated artifacts that illustrate that keyword plus metadata and annotations for each;
- Five related materials for further reading; and
- A works-cited list, including a citation for each of the artifacts collected.

The goal of the curatorial statement is to help the reader understand how this keyword both relates to and fits within digital pedagogy. A good statement provides a working definition and offers the reader a framework for understanding the keyword. This might include important background and context for the keyword, a review of related issues, or a discussion of what pedagogical or methodological approaches help frame work in this area. Curatorial statements also explain criteria for the selection of the ten pedagogical artifacts supplied as evidence for the keyword.

The concept of the “pedagogical artifact” may seem strange—the editors asked curators to supply evidence of teaching and learning within each keyword. The collection focuses not on assigned texts but rather on the teaching materials that frame such texts for students—primarily in the form of syllabi and assignments. As the [template](#) supplied to curators explains, pedagogical artifacts may include (but are not limited to) syllabi, teaching guidelines, assignments, lesson plans, course Web sites, learning objectives, collaborative projects, and even student work (Davis et al., “Original Keyword Entry Template”). The instructions for curators asked for a balance in artifact type, with at least two being assignments or syllabi and no more than two being the work of the curator. The editors asked curators to share the assignments or teaching ideas that were centrally related to the keyword in question.

Because of the lengthy timeline in producing this collection—with groups of keywords submitted in several successive batches and working with eighty-four curators—it was inevitable that some artifacts are repeated in the collection. There are sixteen artifacts used by two different keywords and another twenty-four that use closely related artifacts. In addition to the forked assignments mentioned in “[Pedagogical Materials as Scholarship](#),” other related artifacts come from the same project, like artifacts from the FemTechNet collective built around the shared topics of feminism and technology, which appear in “[Collaboration](#),” “[Gender](#),” “[Network](#),” “[Online](#),” and “[Affect](#).” It would have been unfair to tell curators in later batches that they could not use anything that had been used beforehand.

The editors considered forbidding duplicates but ultimately decided that such repetitions were valuable. In much the same way that keywords in discourse can be understood by two listeners in disparate ways, so, too, can artifacts in the context of separate keywords have different meanings. Even where the keywords “[Poetry](#)” and “[TextAnalysis](#)” share an artifact, because the two approaches to text vary and appeal to different audiences (one to the conventional scholar of literature and the other to the digital humanist), we feel it is important to allow this overlap. Such repetitions may also lead the reader further into the collection, moving through common artifacts from one keyword to another—from “[Play](#)” to “[Fiction](#),” from “[Archive](#)” to “[Intersectionality](#),” from “[Curation](#)” to “[Community](#),” and so on. At the same time, this decision reduces the overall number of unique artifacts available from 590 to 573 across the fifty-nine keywords.

For each artifact, the curator supplies an annotation that includes the following:

- A brief statement of the aim or purpose of the artifact (What is it?);
- A brief statement on its relevance to the keyword (Why is it important or useful? What does it do well? How does it exemplify digital pedagogy?); and
- Guidelines for its use (How can it be integrated into a course? What might need revision or adaptation?).

While the curatorial statement and artifacts with annotations might be read together, like one chapter in an edited collection, artifacts might also be considered on their own merits, with the annotation providing enough information for readers, especially if they want to fork it themselves by reusing it in their own course. We worked to obtain as many permissions as possible so that artifacts could be deposited as discrete pieces in the *Humanities Commons* repository to avoid link rot; additionally, the annotation and accompanying metadata should provide essential information to give context to the artifact.

The five related materials offer the curator the opportunity to point to resources and readings relevant to their keyword, as well as to additional artifacts. We asked our curators to especially consider an audience new to digital pedagogy who might want to read further into a specific keyword (see “[getting started](#)” tag).

Finally, the works-cited list provides all the works cited in the curatorial statement and annotations, including the artifacts themselves. We include the artifact citations to support the scholarly infrastructure for digital pedagogy and offer a model for instructors of how to cite pedagogical materials.

Keywords

Faced with this wealth of material, the editors chose a keyword approach to organize it. We use the term *keyword* in two senses—the common usage as a form of metadata for information retrieval (Burgett and Hendler, “[Keywords: An Introduction](#)”) and a more specialized understanding of the term, which draws on the work of the cultural studies scholar Raymond Williams and his seminal book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. For Williams, a keyword is an important word in common use with contested meanings that drive debate in society. Williams saw his vocabulary as unfixed and still developing (in contrast to a dictionary, which seeks to fix meaning); he even left several blank pages at the end of *Keywords* for future development (“Williams’s Introduction”). Two subsequent editions and other keyword collections inspired by *Keywords* confirm Williams’s prediction of future development.

A number of publications and projects take up the invitation of Williams’s blank pages by updating and adding keywords. These include *New Keywords* (Bennett et al.); the born-digital [Keywords Project](#), which updates Williams’s list of keywords; and *Digital Keywords: A Vocabulary of Information Society and Culture* (Peters), which adapts Williams’s approach to current discourse in digital studies and information technologies. Burgett and Hendler’s [Keywords for American Cultural Studies](#) spawned a [Keywords series](#) from NYU Press, which takes a more focused approach to keywords in specific fields, with eight titles published from 2011 to 2018 (a second edition of American cultural studies as well as keywords for African American studies, Asian American studies, children’s literature, disability studies, environmental studies, Latina/o studies, and media studies).

The NYU Press series follows *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* by having each keyword addressed by a separate author and by focusing on a more specific academic discipline, though the keywords addressed are still also used in public discourse. Similarly, the *International Journal of Learning and Media* (published 2009–2012 and edited by David Buckingham, Tara McPherson, and Ellen Seiter) included a submission type called “keywords,” which were “4,000-6,000 word definitional essays on keywords shaping the landscape of learning and media by senior scholars. By invitation from the editors” (“Submissions”). Other recent keyword-inflected books focusing on digital culture include *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Digital Media* (Ryan et al.) and *Software Studies: A Lexicon* (Fuller).

Like the editors of many of these projects, the editors of *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* hope to promote better communication about our subject across a wide range of discourse communities. Identifying digital pedagogy keywords allows us to document nodes of activity and to promote dialogue across domains and between silos by creating a shared vocabulary.

We also use keywords to reveal differences between communities, as the same keyword may be understood and used differently in different domains. Consider different understandings of the keyword “[Online](#),” which for many in higher education implies content delivery or consumption in a stereotypical understanding of distance education, wherein the student reads content, posts a response to a discussion board, and takes a test. Amy Collier’s exploration of this keyword, however, includes the role of community and social presence of the participants. For any digital pedagogy keyword, the digital is one domain that must be bridged. Many of our keywords (such as “[Poetry](#),” “[Public](#),” or “[Race](#)” might work just as easily as keywords for the humanities generally, but their meaning is complicated in a digital context. We seek to bridge disciplinary divides by including artifacts drawn from across the humanities rather than limiting the project to one academic discipline. While the digital domain might seem alien to some humanists in our audience, pedagogy should offer a bridging experience shared by all.

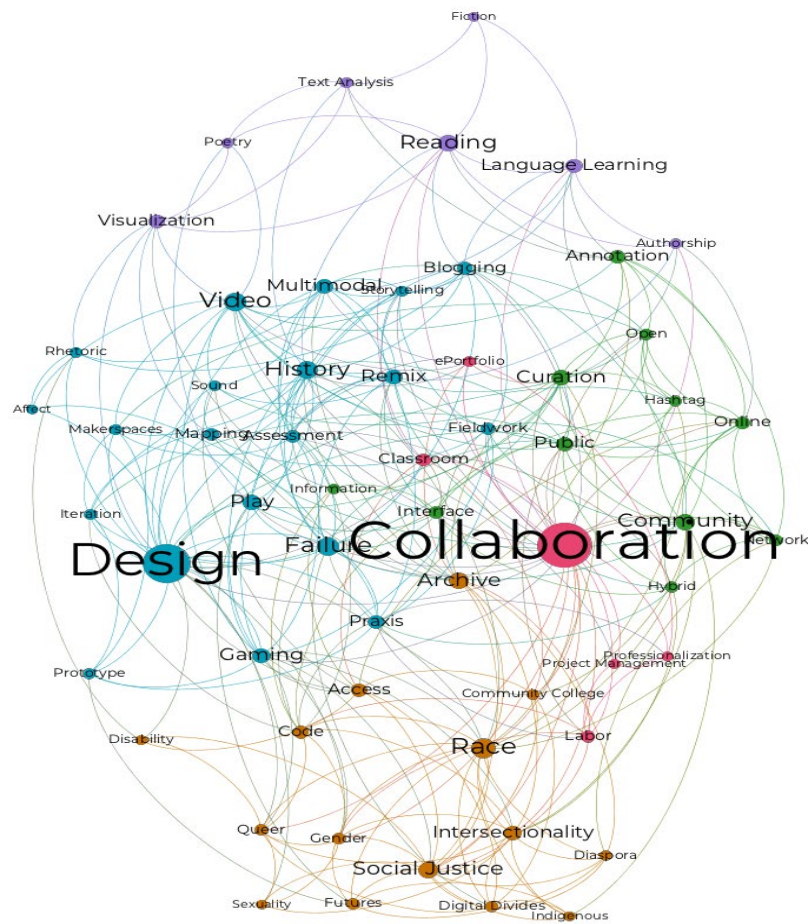
The four editors chose keywords based on observations of pedagogical practices, knowledge of earlier scholarship on digital pedagogy, and assessment of the ways in which keywords function across different discourses. Keywords may represent common areas of practice, innovations in pedagogy, new methodologies, and areas of contention. While the four primary editors made the ultimate decision as to which terms were chosen as keywords, this list was developed from a number of different inputs. The advisory board suggested some keywords and curators, while already-invited curators recommended others. The concept and lists of digital pedagogy keywords were also presented to digital pedagogy practitioners at various conferences and workshops to solicit feedback and suggestions for other keywords in order to develop as full and diverse a range of keywords as possible. In addition, we established the hashtags [#digipedkit](#) for earlier phases of the project and [#curateteaching](#) in subsequent phases to solicit input via social media. The four editors did not always agree on what the keywords should be but worked out disagreements through a process of collaboration and compromise. In some cases, curators also suggested alternate terms for the keywords they were invited to address. Ultimately, the keyword approach generates not a unified vision of digital pedagogy but rather a reflection of richly textured, often-contested practice.

Because keywords arise from practice, they do not always fill out a taxonomy in expected ways. For our project, some keywords like “Gesture-Based Computing” were considered but simply did not yet have enough pedagogical material in the humanities publicly available online to merit inclusion.²⁵ Others considered early in the process, like “MOOC (Massive Open Online Course),” were dropped because the perceived crisis that MOOCs presented to higher education had largely passed.

²⁵ Other keyword collections note similar problems; for example, Philip Nel and Lissa Paul, editors of *Keywords for Children’s Literature*, observe that readers might expect “Native American” as a keyword parallel to “Latino/a” but that there was not yet a critical mass of debate.

The anonymous readers of the initial prospectus to the MLA questioned how keywords functioned because they were so heterogeneous, but the editors argued strongly that this inductive method more clearly represents digital pedagogy as it exists. Taken together, all of the keywords serve to create “a holistic conceptual map” (a phrase used by Jonathan Gray and Laurie Ouellette in their introduction to describe *Keywords for Media Studies*) of digital pedagogy. Here we also return to the sense of keyword as metadata to organize the abundance of pedagogical material collected for this project.

Previous keyword projects have found that keywords tend to operate in systems of meanings, resulting in clusters of keywords. In response to the critique of heterogeneity in the proposed list of keywords, the editors divided the existing list into three broad categories—practices, perspectives, and locations—that were already apparent in the initial list of keywords included in the prospectus. Some keywords, such as “[Code](#)” and “[Annotation](#),” represent practices or methods of learning and research that are either unique to or significantly different in a digital context. Some keywords, such as “[Gender](#)” and “[Race](#),” represent perspectives of cultural criticism that are ongoing areas of inquiry in the humanities that have significant implications when considered in a digital context. These keywords serve as reminders that the digital cannot be separated from the human. Finally, some keywords, like “[Archive](#)” and “[Public](#),” signify the new locations, beyond the classroom, where digital learning occurs. Organizing the collection by this taxonomy also suggested additional keywords to fill out a category, such as “[Project Management](#)” as a practice and “[Classroom](#)” as a location. Other clusters became apparent when the editors asked curators to identify other keywords in the collection that were relevant to their own.



There have been as many as ninety-five keywords considered for this project since it was first conceived in 2011. The initial prospectus listed twenty-four keywords to illustrate how a keyword approach to digital pedagogy might work. The list was essentially finalized at fifty-five keywords once the project was under contract with the MLA, but a few keywords were added and subtracted as the project developed. For example, the editors added “[ePortfolio](#)” as a prominent use of digital technology in higher education and “[Access](#)” to indicate debate around web accessibility and universal design.

To facilitate processing editorial and peer review of this large number of keywords, the editors divided the keywords into five batches. The most significant addition of keywords came in July 2016, when the editors decided to add a sixth and final batch of eight new keywords to address gaps in the collection. The addition of the keyword “[Language Learning](#)” was a response to criticism the editors received at an MLA Annual Convention roundtable: that a collection published by the Modern Language Association should speak to language instructors. The addition of several other keywords sought to make the collection more inclusive: “[Community College](#)” and “[Digital Divides](#)” broaden

the locations for digital pedagogy; “[Diaspora](#),” “[Indigenous](#),” and “[Intersectionality](#)” offer additional perspectives; and “[Futures](#)” and “[Social Justice](#)” broaden the selection of practices in digital pedagogy.

The public development of the project—as an open project on *GitHub*, with conversation encouraged on *Twitter* using the [#curateteaching](#) hashtag, and through critique invited by the editors at several conferences over the years—naturally invited suggestions of new keywords. This addition of keywords required the development of a selection criteria as the keyword list was revised in 2014. Some keywords were too broad, such as “Creativity,” while others were too narrow, such as “Crisis Mapping,” which would fall under the more general keyword “[Mapping](#).” Others were discarded due to overlap with other keywords, such as “GLAM” (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums), which was covered in several keywords like “[Archive](#),” “[Fieldwork](#),” and “[Information](#).” The editors recognized, though, that new suggestions for keywords would continue to emerge, so it would be important to establish criteria for approving any new keywords for the collection:

- Keywords should be in common usage (not a term coined and used by only one person); they are a tool for shared discourse.
- Keywords should be relevant to digital pedagogy; they may be unique to this context or distinctively used in this context (as opposed to analog pedagogy).
- Keywords should be accessible to a mass audience or significant enough that a general audience should learn them.
- Keywords should be current, not outdated.

As with other keyword collections, feasibility also became a determinant of keyword status—whether we could find a curator who felt they could effectively cover the keyword. And, we also faced a problem identified by the editors of *Keywords for Children’s Literature*, who noted that “On a few rare occasions, a word we had hoped to include . . . either did not find someone willing to undertake it or the formerly willing volunteer found it necessary to withdraw from the project” (Nels and Paul). For *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*, those dropped keywords include “Attention,” “Graphic Novels/Comics,” “Mobile,” “Peer Review,” “Edition,” and “Topic Modeling.” Readers who access the project’s *GitHub* site will also find a sixtieth keyword, “[Hacking](#)” (Turkel), which was withdrawn from the collection before final revisions but remains available in draft form on *GitHub* with the permission of the curator.

Tagging

The project uses the conventions of keywords and artifact tagging for organization and information retrieval. While keywords provide a useful table of contents, multiple audiences have confirmed the challenges of finding material beyond this top level of organization. Cross-referenced keywords suggest additional materials to the reader who may not initially have realized their interest in a particular keyword, much in the way that *Amazon’s* algorithms make suggestions for related items.

Artifact tagging offers a second form of organization, discovery, and connection across the collection. The need for this pathway into the collection has been demonstrated to the editors repeatedly over the years during [presentations and workshops](#) on the evolving project. While the collection in development has long been available through both [GitHub](#) and the [WordPress Web site](#) provided by *MLA Humanities Commons* for open peer review, multiple audiences explain that findability is a challenge. For example, at THATCamp Digital Pedagogy ATX 2016, Rebecca Frost Davis ran a small focus group that shared feedback on the interface prototype for *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities*. This group especially asked for tags indicating the level of the assignment to help readers make better use of the collection.

Tags are part of a larger metadata schema. For each artifact collected, curators specified the artifact type and permission status. The MLA copy editors also added subject tags—many of which are keywords themselves (recalling the other meaning of *keyword* as a form of metadata)—to each artifact in preparation for depositing it into the *MLA Humanities Commons* repository. The editors requested additional tags that would help readers use the collection, including tags such as “[getting started](#)” versus “[advanced](#)” for assignment level and technology tool used. At the artifact level, these tags should help with communication across silos and discourse communities, suggesting other artifacts for consideration even where keywords do not capture the interest of the reader.

The editors developed user stories to guide development of the metadata schema. For example, an MLA member who is a tenured associate professor of modern language might begin with the keyword “[Language Learning](#)” and follow cross-referenced keywords to “[Authorship](#),” “[Hashtag](#),” or “[Reading](#).” Looking for artifacts relevant to modern language study, this professor might also scan the tag cloud for “[Spanish](#),” while an instructional technologist might search for a particular tool or technology, like “[Twitter](#)” or “[podcast](#).” The metadata of cross-referenced keywords and tags provide paths through the collection for readers and connections across a network of those who practice digital pedagogy.

Editing in Public via GitHub

Though *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* is being published by the MLA in 2020, it has already been publicly accessible for over six years thanks to the open publishing process that we used for the project. The editorial team decided early on, in 2014, to use the code-sharing Web site [GitHub](#) as an editorial tool to publish the project. Our goal was ambitious: we wanted the entire project, and all of its editorial processes, to be as public, visible, and transparent as possible. *GitHub* helped make this feasible; the site, which is typically used by software programmers to commit code and especially to track changes between different versions of a codebase, has been used in recent years by humanities scholars as an editorial and collaborative tool (Spiro, “[Presentation](#)”).

Our decision to use it for this project builds on a range of recent efforts in the digital humanities and allied fields to do the work of the academy in public, in transparent ways, engaging in open review and version tracking. As scholars such as Kathleen Fitzpatrick and others have argued, open peer review processes have the potential to build greater understanding for the work of the academy at a moment when many state governments in the United States seem to be retreating from their historic investments in higher education, at least partly because the work of the academy is inaccessible to them (*Planned Obsolescence*). While open peer review and open-access scholarship are not in themselves panaceas for these problems, they can help make academic work more discoverable and more public.

Our decision to use *GitHub* for this project was not without significant consequences that we considered carefully before proceeding in this direction. First and most significantly, *GitHub* necessitates working with plain-text files and a formatting protocol called *Markdown* (Gruber); in order to use it for this project, we had to convince curators to use a writing and formatting system that was unfamiliar to many of them. Along with the unconventional nature of the writing style that we were asking of them—“A curatorial statement? Ten examples of what?”—the need to write in a strange new format had the potential to be a major obstacle to taking part in the project. We were enormously glad, however, that some of our colleagues were already very familiar with *Markdown* and *GitHub* and that those who were not were willing to give them a try. As the project progressed, the editors had to assist some curators with the *Markdown* template, but many curators were able to author their entries in *Markdown* and submit them to us through *GitHub*.²⁶

In the first phase of the project, when curators submitted their first drafts, they submitted “pull requests” to upload their work to our *GitHub* repository; after an initial review, we merged their files into the main repository. We then conducted our editorial reviews directly on *GitHub*, in public, sharing links with our curators so that they could see our comments on their drafts, as in [this example for the “Poetry” keyword](#) (“Editor Comments”). The editorial feedback we were giving to our curators was thus fully public and accessible to anyone. We handled keywords in what turned out to be six batches: one batch would be coming in as a set of first drafts for editorial review while we would be uploading revised versions of a second batch for curator review and preparing a third batch for open peer review.

²⁶ Analysis of the *GitHub* project site shows that there were thirty-eight contributors to the *GitHub* repository. Seven are MLA staff members, four are general editors, and the remaining twenty-seven are curators—so nearly a third of our curators submitted their work through *GitHub*.

Working with Open Peer Review

We were lucky, in this work, to have the support of the Modern Language Association as we embarked upon this unconventional editorial process. The MLA team, specifically Nicky Agate and Kathleen Fitzpatrick, engaged with us from the first with enthusiasm; MLA staff members “forked” our *GitHub* repository—essentially creating their own copy of it—and did their own review of the project on *GitHub*, sending us copy edits to consider as they prepared texts for a round of public peer review. That next step of the process, open peer review, inspired by Kathleen Fitzpatrick’s then-recent experiment with *Planned Obsolescence*, happened on the *Humanities Commons*, where the MLA established [a WordPress site that would provide a venue](#) for each of the keywords in the collection to be reviewed by the public. Each of the keyword batches went up as a group, and the public was invited through social promotion in scholarly networks on *Twitter* and *Facebook*, through MLA notices and newsletters, through e-mail to scholarly mailing lists, and through direct e-mail solicitation. Peer reviewers added comments in the sidebar of each text using the *WordPress* theme *CommentPress*, a practice that has been used often for digital humanities projects (see Gold, “[Digital Humanities Moment](#)”; Fitzpatrick, *Planned Obsolescence*; [Dougherty and Nawrotzki](#)). Overall, peer-to-peer reviewers and authors exchanged 435 comments. These comments were merged into larger editorial revision requests by the editors, and revised copies of the keywords were again uploaded to *GitHub*.

Shifting the Concept of “Published”

The result of so much public work is that the project has been in circulation well before it has been “published” by the MLA. What this means, of course, is that the work has been out in the world, helping scholars with their teaching already, but also that the editors needed to think through issues of versioning and citation of draft material even before the project reached its final stages. For example, at the top of each draft keyword on *GitHub*, there is a bulleted list of six potential publication statuses (“unreviewed draft,” “draft version undergoing editorial review,” “draft version undergoing peer-to-peer review,” “draft version undergoing MLA copyediting,” “awaiting preprint copy,” and “published”), with the current status in boldface. The project has already been cited in journal articles, conference presentations, faculty annual reports, and tenure and promotion applications, and we have anecdotal evidence that it has already been helping scholars begin to approach teaching in new ways.

The use of such unconventional processes was not without risks, however, some of which have impacted our project. For instance, the results of the public peer-to-peer review we conducted on the *Humanities Commons* were uneven; some keywords received many comments and useful feedback, while others received very little. Such differing responses had to do with a variety of factors: Some authors who have a large and active following in social media spaces such as *Twitter* were able to drive readers to their keywords effectively, an option that was less realistic for authors who did not engage with social media on a regular basis. Then, too, public peer-to-peer processes

have become more common in recent years, leading to a sense of public-peer-review fatigue akin to that occasioned by the growth of crowdsourcing projects in the GLAM sector. That this peer-to-peer review process relied on such persistent public engagements represents a strength and a challenge for this collection and those similar to it. Public peer-to-peer review processes can open up the normally closed and private systems of peer review, wherein a publisher sends works out for review by one or two individual scholars, but they do so at a significant cost of labor, time, and affective work (see Fitzpatrick, *Generous*, especially 132–80 [“Working in Public”]).

The Shifting Role of “Publisher”

Given that so much of the work done in preparation for this collection, from the writing to the editing to the peer review, was done in public, one might reasonably ask how open and public processes change the role of a publisher.

Certainly, many aspects of the publication process typically controlled and organized by the press became the work of the editors of this volume. If the work of a press during the period of publication often focuses on editorial and production processes, much of that work became the purview of the editors themselves. Where the press became particularly important, though, was in both its capacity to provide an imprimatur for the work and its social and marketing reach. Especially for the subject of pedagogy, which is sometimes given short shrift in the academy in favor of research publications, the presence of the Modern Language Association helped give this collection a level of authority and stature that attracted curators to the project. Then, too, as we moved through the public peer review, the MLA’s willingness to alert its large membership to the project aided our attempts to bring a diverse set of perspectives to the review process.

As we move toward the finalization of this collection, the MLA has been creating the *WordPress*-based Web site on which the project will be finalized. We have been lucky to work with a publisher that puts its resources toward the creation of innovative forms of publication, collaborating with us to conceive of and implement interactive features that will make the publication usable, valuable, and free for its readers. Thus, the role of the publisher has changed in projects like this, with perhaps more weight on its publicity and Web site production functions than might be typical for, say, a printed academic book.

Conclusion: A Free, Open, Born-Digital Collection

And so, after many years of work, it is immensely satisfying to present *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* to its readers in officially published form. Throughout the many years we have worked on this project, we have attempted to find a term capacious enough to describe it. Is it a book? A collection? A Web site? Some hybrid form of all of the above? Perhaps, most simply, *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* might be considered a “publication,” an act of making public the time, effort, labor, and scholarship of hundreds of humanities instructors related to teaching and learning. We have chosen to publish the collection online, in an open-access format, because we want it to be used widely and to serve as a resource for colleagues looking for guidance and examples as they expand their teaching practices. And it is our hope that this collection can inspire more research and scholarship on the critical work of pedagogy, the work of teaching that is too often undersung and uncelebrated.

We thank everyone who has contributed to this collection—the curators who wrote keywords, the creators who allowed their pedagogical materials to be included, the reviewers who provided comments on the multiple batches of draft keywords, the collection’s advisory board, the MLA staff members who have helped us bring the collection into its current form—but most of all, we thank you, the reader. May *Digital Pedagogy in the Humanities* inform and inspire you as you build and sustain your work in digital pedagogy.

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